













# THE DOMESTIC SERVANT CLASS

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*Dedicated to*  
*My Guru*  
*Prof. G. S. Ghurye*

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## PREFACE

THE DOMESTIC servants form an important element in the social life of a community, contributing to its general health and welfare. The wide variety of tasks performed in the household by this class of workers are certainly vital to the conduct and well-being of family-life. Widespread recognition has already begun to be given to the social value of the work of the domestic servants in the countries of the West in the course of the present century, accompanied by attempts to raise the status of their occupation from the low state of servility and thereby putting it on a more or less equal footing with other occupations. This is because of a drastic reduction in the number of persons taking up domestic work owing to severe competition from the rapidly advancing Industrialism offering better standards and conditions of employment to the workers. The situation thus created has led to a number of researches and enquiries into the problems of domestic service, with measures to bring about effective changes and reforms in the conditions offered.

In India, on the other hand, the conscience of the public appears to have been totally indifferent to the working conditions of household workers the value of whose labour has remained completely ignored, and been simply taken for granted. They are left at the mercy of individual employers. This is because, even as we understand it, the shortage of domestic workers has not been experienced by the servant-employing classes to any considerable extent, owing to a more or less regular supply of cheap domestic labour from the rural areas to the towns and cities, which may prompt them to give an understanding thought to the problems facing domestic workers. As a result, this large and important class of workers has remained almost untouched by any significant study of national importance.

A cursory attempt was sponsored by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences to examine the situation of the domestic servants

with an emphasis on the question of a "fair wage", the report on which was published in *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 1958.\* But this could hardly be called a study from the point of view of intensive research, for the sample selected was very small comprising of only 71 persons and the locality selected, was restricted to a small colony in Chembur, a new suburb of the city of Bombay. With the sole exception of this very limited enquiry, which can easily be by-passed, as of little sociological significance, there seems to exist no other investigation on the subject so far as we know of today.

The present work which was planned and started in the year 1956, and submitted and accepted for the Ph.D. degree of the University of Bombay as 'A Socio-Economic Survey of the Domestic Servant class', is about the first approach to the study of the living and working conditions of the domestic servants, fairly extensive and intensive in its scope. With the aim of focussing public thought on some of the greatly neglected aspects of the social biography of the domestic servant class, this study may perhaps claim to be the first one of its kind in this country that seeks to investigate comprehensively into the nature and problems of the occupation of domestic service confronting the workers in the field with a given set of conditions of employment. At the same time it attempts to open vistas for a more or less correct solution of these problems of the domestic servants, with due recognition of the enormous difficulties in the field, and is accompanied by modest suggestions.

At this stage I take the opportunity to express my deep sense of permanent indebtedness and gratitude to my great teacher Professor G. S. Ghurye under whose painstaking and personal guidance, encouragement, and inspiration this book has been prepared. In fact the very idea of studying the life and labour of the domestic servants for the purpose of a thesis was first conceived by him. Visualising an important field with a vast scope for research and enquiry, that lay hitherto unexplored, it was he who drew my attention to it, and interested me in implementing the plan of investigation.

\* A summary of the report was also published in the publication of the International Labour Office, *Industry and Labour*, Vol. XX No. 6 September, 1958.

The high significance of this research that I undertook under Professor Ghurye's invaluable guidance and direction, can be well appreciated in the context of the present state of affairs when the 'Domestic Workers (Conditions of Employment) Bill' which was introduced in the Indian Parliament on August 21, 1959, by Shri P. N. Rajabhoj, is expected to become an Act in the very near future. It is very gratifying to realise that this work is ready at an opportune moment coinciding with the Labour Ministry's resolve to consider the feasibility of granting some of the demands made in a representation to the Prime Minister by the All-India Domestic Workers' Union, Delhi, to protect the domestic workers under the cover of the Payment of Wages Act, the Minimum Wages Act, the Shops and Establishment Act and the Industrial Disputes Act. Moreover, in view of the fact that the Government of Bombay is expected to conduct enquiries about the condition of the domestic servants under the Scheme of "Socio-Economic Enquiries" during the Third Five Year Plan, if this study proves useful to the Government and if it contributes to the betterment of the condition of the domestic workers, it is sincerely felt that it will have served its desired purpose.

In this connection my special thanks are due to the publishers, for the genuine interest and care they have taken, and all the co-operation they have offered in the progress of this book.

I feel very grateful also to the authorities of *Akalankalaya*—the 'Domestic Servants Recreation and Social Centre' — for their kind permission to visit their premises and for the side-lights they have given on some of the aspects of the life of the domestic workers from their own experiences, for incorporation in the text of this book.

And lastly, before I close, I deem it necessary to acknowledge my obligations to the numerous domestic servant friends without whose willing co-operation in parting with information on the details of their life and labour, this work could not have been undertaken.

Bombay,  
25th Dec., 1959

A.B.M.

N.B. Attention of the readers is drawn to page 215, line 12 where instead of Rs. 40.00, Rs. 100.00 should be read.





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## CHAPTER I

### DOMESTIC SERVICE —THE PERSPECTIVE

HUMAN SOCIETIES at all stages of their development have been differentiated internally, in a greater or lesser degree of complexity, into groups of individuals performing different roles and functions for the satisfaction of their own as well as of each other's needs. The co-ordination of the activities of all the members into a common working, occasioned by a high measure of dependence of persons on one another for goods and services, has been recognised as necessary for the survival and solidarity of the group and for the preservation of its status quo — known in sociological literature as the process of co-operation.

However, not only are societies differentiated into various functional groups, but the activities and positions of each functional group are graded according to the value attached to it. Thus as Bernard Barber explains, "Any differentiated social role or activity that meets a functional problem in society must of necessity have some measure of value attached to it."<sup>1</sup> Also it should be remembered that the different kinds of roles and activities are never equally evaluated, or of equal importance to any society. Some are graded high, some intermediate, and some low in any system of stratification of a society according to their functional essentiality to the group with reference to the nature and amount of knowledge, skill and responsibility necessary for their performance.<sup>2</sup>

All through the ages we find that some distinction has always been habitually maintained between non-industrial activities which are classed as worthy, honourable and noble, and industrial or menial occupations which are associated with subservience and

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1. Barber Bernard: *Social Stratification*, New York, 1952. p. 3.
  2. Cf. North C. *Social Differentiation*, North Carolina 1926; Sorokin P. *Social Mobility*, New York, 1927; Hobhouse L. T. *Morals In Evolution*, London, 1929; Landtmann G. *Origin of The Inequality of Classes*, Chicago, 1938.

are therefore considered as unworthy, debasing and ignoble.<sup>3</sup> It follows therefore, as a natural sequence, that the non-industrial occupations which are roughly comprised under government, warfare, religious observances and recreational pursuits are generally manned by what are known as the upper classes, whereas, the industrial or menial occupations going under the name of manual labour, which include the performance of productive work and employment in personal service, are the exclusive occupations of the lower classes of society.<sup>4</sup> The functions of the lower classes, who perform menial duties and the drudgery of life, have long been recognised as essential in order that the upper classes may be released for activities that lead to refinement, civilization and progress.

One of these low ranking occupations always relegated to the poorest classes of society and suffering under a stigma of special degradation is Domestic Service. It is with the class of workers engaged in this field of occupation that the present study is concerned.

The function of the domestic servant has been variously evaluated at different times and in different climes, in the social history of mankind. It is no doubt that before the beginning of the modern era when hoards of servants were hired and maintained in one household, the servants were regarded as evidence of their master's wealth and social standing by conspicuously wasting their time and effort in the performance of their master's leisure. This was at a time when servants were numerous and far out-numbered the members of the family they served, with the result only a fraction of the household duties fell to their lot. Perhaps the sole function of a large number of domestic servants was personal attendance upon their master at the same time displaying his ability "unproductively to consume a large amount of service", which Veblen calls, "performance of [for ?] vicarious leisure".<sup>5</sup>

3. Cf. Ghurye G. S. : *Caste And Class In India*, Bombay 1950.

4. Cf. Carr Saunders: *Social Structure Of England And Wales*, Oxford, 1937.

5. Veblen Thorstein: *The Theory Of The Leisure Class*, London 1899. pp. 53-67.

But with the changing social and economic conditions of the modern world, the functions of the household servant have assumed a different significance. With the size of the families and of the households becoming small, a large number of women seeking employment outside, and the comparatively much limited capacity of large sections of the middle class population to maintain domestics on their establishments, the social value of the labour of the servant has taken a different orientation. The domestic worker is no longer a conspicuous waster of his master's wealth, but a vital part of his household intimately affecting the conduct of family life by performing some of the most arduous and unpleasant tasks, very often, single-handed, necessary for the comfort and well-being of all the members of the family.

Recognising the social value of the services performed by the domestic worker, Mary V. Robinson, Director of the Women's Bureau U. S. Department of Labour, very aptly remarks, "Household employment is obviously a service of vital importance because of its contribution to the health and happiness of families, the convenience and comfort of homes. Certainly workers who prepare food, launder clothes, keep households clean and attractive, care for children, old people or invalids and perform numerous tasks that oil the daily routine of existence are engaged in socially worthwhile services which not only promote the well-being of the household but contribute to the welfare of the community".<sup>6</sup>

But this is only a very recent recognition and appreciation of the significance of the labour of the domestic workers. Otherwise domestic service as an occupation has always remained neglected and despised, which accounts for the lack of all kinds of standards — standards of training, standards of employment, standards of work performance and legal standards to protect the workers — in this field of employment.

With the hang over of a social stigma from the past era the domestic servants are yet considered a class apart. This stigma which attaches to domestic service, which is the fundamental

6. Mary V. Robinson: *Old Age Insurance For Household Workers*, Washington, 1947. Publication of the Women's Bureau U.S. Department of Labour.

cause of the occupation remaining unstandardized, could only be explained by an examination of the evolution of the occupation in different societies, ancient and mediaeval, primitive and civilized, eastern and western. A glimpse into the past history of the occupation reveals to us that it had its origin in the institution of slavery in almost all parts of the world. The story of the domestic workers as one time household slaves provides interesting material for an understanding of the present conditions and status of this class of workers.

Beginning with the primitive societies, we find domestic slavery traced by Dr. H. J. Nieboer<sup>7</sup> in his study of "Slavery As An Industrial System" based on ethnological researches among savage tribes in the various stages of development — among the hunting and fishing tribes, pastoral tribes, and tribes that have attained the stage of agriculture. He maintains that among people living chiefly by hunting and fishing, domestic drudgery meaning household work, is performed by slaves; in fact it is their only occupation for they cannot be employed for hunting and fishing, which occupations require skill and prowess. They are set to do only women's work — domestic duties.<sup>8</sup> This is true only among those people where women enjoy a rather high position and where men wish to relieve them of household drudgery by giving them the help of slaves. Thus the condition of women is an essential factor in the keeping of domestic slaves, "Where women enjoy high consideration" writes Nieboer, "the men are more likely to procure slaves who are to assist the women in their work."<sup>9</sup> On the other hand where slavery does not exist and where women themselves are treated as slaves, domestic labour is almost always incumbent on women.

The keeping of slaves for household work is more possible among pastoral people where a rich owner of herds "can easily support by the produce of his cattle some domestic slaves who perform no productive labour".<sup>10</sup> It should be remembered that household labour is considered economically unproductive, therefore the keeping of such unproductive workers as domestic slaves

7. Dr. H. J. Nieboer: *Slavery As An Industrial System*, The Hague 1910.

8. Cf. Landtmann G. Op. cit.

9. Nieboer: Op. cit. p. 388.

10. Ibid., p. 389.

primarily necessitates the existence of a class of productive workers the product of whose labour is sufficient to maintain themselves, their master's family as well as the unproductive workers like the domestic slaves in their master's household. This is more especially true among people living on agriculture where subsistence depends chiefly on labour. The keeping of domestic slaves would not be possible to assist the women in their household work, if the women themselves were to go out and labour on land to provide for their domestic helps.

That domestic labour was the occupation of household slaves in the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome is evident from the pages of history. We also become acquainted with the fact that the demand for domestic slaves increased with the advance of civilization, and get glimpses of the treatment the domestic slaves received under their Greek and Roman masters.

The first mention of domestic slavery in Greece is in the Heroic Age where slaves were mostly female domestics who were bought and sold for long terms. Though normally they were treated as members of the family, cared for in times of illness and old age with affection, we do find that occasionally they were brutally treated. Domestic service was, in fact, the only occupation of slaves, for there were no agricultural or craftsmen slaves at that time.<sup>11</sup>

In Sparta domestic labour was the function of Helots in the towns, who were enslaved by the Spartans and had all the liberties of a mediaeval serf.<sup>12</sup>

Women slaves did most of the domestic drudgery in Periclean Athens and like the household slaves in the age of Homer they were cared for in illness and old age. If they were loyal they received all the good treatment of a faithful servant like a member of the family. On the whole the treatment of household slaves was mild in Athens.<sup>13</sup>

We become acquainted with Roman domestic slavery in the later days of the Republic and the Empire. The early Roman

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11. Will Durant: *Life In Greece*, New York. 1939. p. 46.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 94.



household was a self-supporting unit with every family as the producer of all the goods and services for its own consumption. The division of labour that existed was between male and female members of the family. But the great wars under the Republic and the Empire, with the consequent influx of wealth, the introduction of Greek individualistic ideas and amusements, and the spread of slavery, transformed the Roman household as it affected other sections of the society. The activities that were carried on by the members of the family were handed over to slaves especially in the urban areas among the wealthier classes. The transfer from the domestic system of economy created a great demand for labour. Thus, writing about the age of Cicero, Warde Fowler says, "In the households of the rich the great increase of wealth and luxury had led to a constant demand for helps of all kinds, each with a certain amount of skill in his own particular department."<sup>14</sup>

In this manner there came about a minute division of labour on the prosperous Roman Villas. On the estates agricultural slaves were employed who were called the 'familia rustica,' and within the house, as E. T. Hiller enumerates, "...retinues of bakers, spinners, hair dressers, weavers, cooks, even physicians, surgeons, tutors etc., attached to the house-hold, did the work formerly carried on by the members of the family. The old habits of domesticity", he continues, "were abandoned in favour of dancing, music, literature and politics as items of chief concern. Popular interests centered around the circus, the banquet and the theatre".<sup>15</sup>

Household slavery in the Roman Empire has been treated in fairly great detail by R. H. Barrow in a chapter devoted to the subject.<sup>16</sup> He gives a list of the domestic staff in a Roman household including stewards, valets, cooks, butlers, porters, bath-attendants, anointers, courriers, litterbearers, secretaries, slaves in charge of brooches, silver drinking vessels and perfumes, nurses, tutors, musicians, dancers, etc. etc. The number of slaves engaged

14. Warde Fowler W. *Social Life At Rome In The Age Of Cicero*, London 1929, p. 205.

15. Hiller E. T. *Principles Of Sociology*, New York 1933, pp. 440-441.

16. Barrow. R. H.: *Slavery In The Roman Empire*, London 1928. pp. 22-64.

in domestic duties in some very wealthy families ran up to three to four hundred, "to minister to their owners' pleasures and gratify every sense". But these were only exceptional cases. Anyway, no man of dignity would walk on the road or go on a journey unattended by a train of personal slaves and servants. From the picture that is presented of household slavery we surmise that perhaps in no other civilization before or after Rome domestic service was elaborated on so vast a scale!

It should be remembered, however, that personal service in the Roman household in the city could not have been magnified to such an extent had it not been for the growth of a class of productive agricultural slaves in the country. As Nieboer maintains, "The Romans would not have kept a *familia urbana*, if there had not been a *familia rustica*".<sup>17</sup>

As to the treatment received by domestic slaves we find evidence of extreme cruelty, floggings, mutilations, and brandings by the masters. Punishments were meted out for the most absurd reasons. But instances of a human relation of affection and devotion between master and slave were not altogether lacking. "The domestic slave living in close association with his owner's family," writes Barrow, "found his life bound up with theirs, and often became attached by ties of affection and common interest".<sup>18</sup>

Domestic work in several European countries including England,<sup>19</sup> continued to be performed by household slaves until the emancipation of slaves.

Coming to the eastern countries, we find that in China, for centuries there had existed a system of "slave girls" called *Mui-Tsai*, meaning "little sister", or "slave". Unwanted children were sold in infancy by destitute parents on the verge of starvation to members of the upper classes and were brought up as domestic slaves whose whole life was one long drudgery, subject to cruelty and ill-treatment under unscrupulous masters and

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17. Nieboer Op. cit. p. 389. *Familia Urbana* means household slavery.

18. Barrow: Op. cit. p. 64.

19. Domestic slaves in England in the Anglo-Saxon times were bought and sold in certain towns and cities like Bristol which were noted slave markets.

mistresses.<sup>20</sup> This kind of domestic slavery, was slavery of the worst nature.

All over the Muslim world, right upto the present times, slavery has been the chief feature of domestic work among the upper classes proverbially known for the idle and luxurious life of their women in the harems.<sup>21</sup> In fact household slaves rather than field slaves were the rule.

Domestic work in ancient India was performed chiefly by slaves and Sudras who were members of a servile class impoverished in the conflicts, addicted to manual tasks, and ordained to live by serving the people of the higher varnas. We have evidence of male and female slaves, dasas and dasis employed in domestic work as early as in the Vedic society attending on their priestly and warrior masters. We find that from the Vedic period right upto the Gupta age as delineated by Ram Sharan Sharma<sup>22</sup> slaves and Sudras were engaged as domestic servants. The conditions of, and the treatment accorded to these household workers, are depicted in such works as the Dharma Sutras, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Kama Sutra, Santi Parvan of the Mahabharata, Buddhist and Jain texts, and in the works of Panini, Gautama and Manu.

The very low social and economic position endured by the Sudra servants is borne out by certain restrictions imposed upon them. For instance. Gautama in the post-Vedic period enjoins that, "the Sudra servant should use the shoes, umbrellas, garments and mats thrown away by the people of higher varnas". He further adds that, "the remnants of food are meant for the Sudra servant".<sup>23</sup> It is definite that though the servants were not starved, the food given to them was of a decidedly inferior quality. Manu also refers to the food and dress of the Sudras employed as domestic servants and like the Santi Parvan in the Gupta age repeats the same injunctions as laid down by Gautama. Never-

20. Macmunn Sir George. *Slavery Through The Ages* London 1938. p. 43. Cf. also Granet M. *Chinese Civilization*, London 1930. Latourette K. S. *Chinese, Their History And Culture*, New York 1951.

21. Nieboer op. cit. 388.

22. Ram Sharan Sharma: *Sudras In Ancient India*, Delhi 1958. Cf. also Ghurye G. S. *Caste And Class In India*, Bombay 1950 pp. 51, 60, 84.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

theless Gautama and Santi Parvan, enjoin the master to support the Sudra servant when he is unable to work.<sup>24</sup>

Although instances of corporal punishments to the dasas are not wanting, we find that on the whole slaves and servants living in better households were well-fed and kindly treated, and enjoyed greater security of livelihood than the hired labourers. They were very often treated as members of the family. But servants when they became old and infirm were generally thrown away.<sup>25</sup>

Buddhism and Jainism emphasised kind treatment for the servants and prescribed that they should be fed and cared for in times of sickness, and be granted occasional holidays and should not be given tasks beyond their capacity. On the other hand the servants were expected to be content with their wages and give satisfactory work to their masters.<sup>26</sup>

In Kautilya's Arthashastra we find definite rules regarding the relation between masters and servants and the treatment of servants. The wages of the servants were fixed and fines were levied for those who neglected their work. The servant's rights were for the first time protected by law. Kautilya prescribed that it was the duty of the king to compel the people to respect the claims of their dasas and slaves. Such instructions for kind treatment of slaves and servants were repeated in the edicts of Asoka.<sup>27</sup>

Kautilya laid down one important function for domestic servants and that was, they should act as spies while attending upon their masters. "Working as menial servants, and thus coming into contact with their masters every minute", says Sharma, "they (servants) were thought to be the best persons to report correctly on their private character".<sup>28</sup>

Manu also, in the post-Mauryan period prescribed wages for the Sudra maids and servants suitable to their ability and in-

24. Cf. Ghurye G. S. *Op. cit.* p. 64.

25. Cf. Sharma R. *Op. cit.* p. 95.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

27. *Ibid.* pp. 154-155. Cf. also Kautilya: 'Arthashastra' translated by R. Shamasastri, Bangalore 1915.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

dustry and the size of their family, with due considerations of time and place.<sup>29</sup> The proper maintenance of Sudra domestic slaves and servants is demanded by the *Santi Parvan* and the *Kamasutra* in the Gupta period.<sup>30</sup> In the "Sakuntala" the great poet Kalidasa has put in the mouth of Kanva, the ascetic foster-father of Sakuntala, words of advice to her on her departure to her husband's place. One piece of advice contained in it reads, "Be very considerate and polite towards your servants (*Parijana*)".<sup>31</sup> All this evidence tends to show that in ancient India some attention atleast seems to have been given to domestic workers by the law-givers, unlike in the modern times.

That the Sudra domestic slaves and servants enjoyed a higher social status than most of the other types of Sudras can be seen from the fact that their food could be accepted even by the Brahman masters. It was provided by Brhaspati and Yajna-*valkya* that food could be accepted from slaves and domestic servants.<sup>32</sup> *Apastambha* also permitted food prepared by Sudra servants under the guidance of higher *varnas*.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, we find that the occupation of a cook was practised by slaves and servants. Ofcourse, while cooking, they were expected to observe absolute cleanliness.

The social and economic history of our country furnishes ample information that domestic work was the occupation of Sudras and slaves not only in the ancient period but also throughout the mediaeval ages right upto the nineteenth century. Domestic slavery of some form or another has always existed in practically all parts of India till slavery as such was finally abolished by Act V of 1843.<sup>34</sup> Both under Hindu and Mohammedan rule we hear of *praedial* and domestic slavery.

W. H. Moreland has devoted a whole section in a chapter, to domestic services in India at the death of Akbar.<sup>35</sup> Most of

29. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

31. Kalidas: *Sakuntala*, Referred to by Dr. G. S. Ghurye.

32. Sharma Op. cit. p. 257.

33. Ghurye G. S. Op. cit. p. 81.

34. Banaji D. R. *Slavery In British India*, Bombay 1938.

35. Moreland W. H.: *India At The Death Of Akbar*, London 1920 pp. 87-91.

the urban domestic workers were slaves, although free men performing the same functions were not unknown and the conditions under which both the domestic slaves, and free servants worked were not quite different so that they could be treated as a single group. Moreland is struck by the profusion of domestic workers in Moghul India and discusses the extent to which domestic service was elaborated in that period, for he writes, "The amount of labour expended in the performance of personal services, is if I am not mistaken, one of the outstanding economic facts of the age of Akbar".<sup>36</sup> And he feels that the large numbers of domestic servants in present day India "is no modern phenomenon, but is in fact an attenuated survival of the fashions prevailing in the time of Akbar and doubtless dating from a much earlier period".<sup>37</sup>

The pomp and luxury of the Moghul aristocracy in which the Emperor set the standards has been known to every student of history. The Imperial household contained a staff of hundreds of thousands of servants attending upon the ladies of the zenana. Numerous servants were to be found at the court, in the stables and in various other departments. The nobles, officers and soldiers of the Moghul army followed the example set by the emperor and kept large staffs of servants required by the style of living. Thus we hear of nobles being followed by umbrella-bearers, and cup-bearers and servants to drive away flies! But this fashion was not confined to the entourage of the emperor for it is reported that everybody, even the families of smaller means, were well-attended upon by servants and slaves in the India of the Moghuls in almost all the towns and cities, whether at Delhi or at Surat, Golconda or Vijayanagar. Bijapur or Goa. Urban domestic servitude, as observed by Moreland, was concerned almost exclusively with luxury and display, and although the avocation was necessary, most of the functions could have been performed by much smaller numbers, for he writes, "much of the domestic service rendered was sheer waste".<sup>38</sup> But the conditions of the servants and slaves were very poor indeed!

36. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Their wages sufficed for little more than a bare existence. The monthly wage of an ordinary servant was on an average not more than Rs. 1½. Slaves were bought and sold as commodities. Many of the household slaves were imported from Africa and Western Asia and were considered as essential articles of luxury. There were also Indian slaves who were captured in the raids among villages, and whose status was hereditary. Many of the native slaves were obtained by voluntary surrender of individuals or their children in times of famine. Some of them were debt-slaves or criminals sold into slavery. The slaves as a class were not badly treated on the whole and occupied a position similar to that of a free servant in the master's household. Some mention of household slavery in Rajputana which prevailed right upto the last century is made in Tod's "*Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*".<sup>39</sup> Most of the household slaves were females and were known by the name of 'goli' or 'dasi', although male household slaves, 'golas' or 'dasas' formed a significant group too. And Rajput families were noted for large numbers of a hereditary class of male and female slaves. Famine in the desert regions of Rajasthan caused thousands to be sold into slavery. Slaves were also acquired from predatory raids on villages by Pindaris and mountain tribes.

A curious custom among the upper class Rajputs, pointed out by Tod, was that of sending handmaids and other slaves with the bride as a part of the dower at the marriage of a daughter. They varied in number according to the status of the family. The girls sent with the bride often became the concubines of the bridegroom. A similar custom was reported in Gujerat also.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned above domestic slavery was not merely an institution of ancient or mediaeval India but it persisted in this country even in the British period upto the fifth decade of the nineteenth century in practically all the provinces and was not confined to any one region only. Most of the domestic servants in the course of Indian history have always been slaves. The

39. Tod: *Annals And Antiquities of Rajasthan*, London 1920, Vols. I-III pp. 206-207.

40. Ibid., p. 731 Vol. I also p. 1222. Vol. II.

prevalence of the institution in various provinces of India like Bombay, Madras, Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Malabar, was traced by D. R. Banaji in his scholarly researches.<sup>41</sup> Cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras were teeming with household slaves which formed a considerable portion of the total population. Jagirdars, Sahukars, Zamindars, rich Brahmins, Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, and Christians, all families of consequence and respectability maintained slaves on their domestic establishments. In fact the practice of domestic slavery was so much inter-woven with the customs and feelings of the native population, since it has always been recognised by Hindu and Muslim law, that modern legislators, horrified at the atrocities perpetrated, found it at first difficult to eradicate the age-old institution from the social structure of the country.

Most of the domestic slaves were of indigenous origin. In many cases the slavery was debt-slavery where a person pledged his wife or children or even himself as security for money borrowed, "rendering the ordinary services of a domestic slave".<sup>42</sup> Very often parents sold their children into domestic slavery in times of famine. We hear of slaves bought and sold in the open market in the streets of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The province of Bengal was notorious for the practice of kidnapping of young children who were sold into slavery in private households. Not only were the domestic slaves taken from the native population but there is also mention of Negro slaves secretly imported from Africa and found working in wealthier households especially of the Nawabs where they were much prized as objects of display. The Indo-Portuguese families of Bombay also had a special preference for African slaves.<sup>43</sup>

Although domestic slaves were exempt from providing for themselves and their families and generally treated with gentleness and leniency, there is ample evidence to show that under some cruel masters or mistresses they received very harsh treatment. Female domestic slaves were almost universally kept for

41. D. R. Banaji: *Op. Cit.*

42. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 194.



sensual purposes,<sup>44</sup> and children were often the objects of utmost cruelty under ill-tempered mistresses.

The above discussions regarding household occupation right from the ancient times shed light on the fact that the forerunners of the modern domestic servants in several parts of the world were domestic slaves, that domestic service as we know it to-day is an out-growth of an earlier form of slavery both in the eastern and in the western countries. In other words the functions and services that were performed in the households by slaves in bondage are now taken over by domestic servants who belong to the class of free-wage labour.

In the context of these circumstances it is now easy to understand the low status attached to this occupation. Slavery has in almost all times and places been associated with the performance of most subordinate functions requiring little care, forethought, or skill.<sup>45</sup> Slave labour has been considered incompatible with higher forms of art or efficiency since it is carried out under compulsion and bondage. Moreover, the slave is looked down upon as belonging to a physically weaker or socially inferior race to whom the members of the more powerful race have delegated the burden of heavy and disagreeable work. Men have in all times and places been known to be generally inclined by nature to delegate dirty and disagreeable work to others rather than perform it themselves, owing to cleanliness taboos and notions of spiritual contamination associated with certain functions which are held with contempt. The slave being a powerless creature, weakened by circumstances, and kept in bondage is made to perform these functions under pressure of compulsion. Thus almost all the functions performed by slaves come to be associated in the minds of men with weakness and subordination and hence the degradation attached to all forms of slave labour.<sup>46</sup> The notions of contempt for menial tasks appeared in the West in the fourth century B.C., under the influence of the teachings

44. Ibid.

45. This does not apply to the learned Greek tutors employed as slaves in Roman households, who were instrumental in transmitting the Greek culture to the Roman world.

46. Cf. Veblen *Op. cit.* pp. 36-38.

of Greek philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon.<sup>47</sup> In India a similar phenomenon of contempt for menial tasks and occupations appeared in the post-Vedic society and extended ultimately to the hands employed in them.<sup>48</sup> The stigma attached to domestic service is not difficult to understand against this background of the historical origins of the occupation in slavery.

In the countries of Europe, domestic service, in many instances, did not grow directly out of slavery, but like several other forms of labour passed through the transitory stage of serfdom under the feudal regime. The serf was no doubt a forced labourer, destitute of property, a fixed portion of whose services was at the disposal of the master or the lord. But, unlike the slave, he was not the property of the master entirely deprived of rights by his very birth.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless in a society sharply divided along class lines the serf, although free in law, occupied the lowest grade, devoid of respectability, perhaps as low as that occupied by the slave before him. In many cases the serfs were none other than emancipated slaves, who, lacking the wherewithal to feed and clothe themselves, attached themselves to their masters' households in return for services. Although the serfs were mostly agricultural labourers, attached to the soil, they were not always, so, for we do have records of domestic serfs. In fact, one of the services the serf or the lower vassal was expected to render to his lord, apart from the economic and military, was domestic service.<sup>50</sup> F. L. Ganshoff traces the similarity between the words 'das Gesinde,' which still stands for domestic servants in modern German, and 'gasindus', which denotes the humble origins of the institution of vassalage in the early middle ages in France and Germany.<sup>51</sup>

In India too, while most of the domestic work was performed by the slaves in the urban areas, in the rural areas, it was chiefly confined to the serfs who were in most cases none other than agricultural slaves living in perpetual bondage. It has always been the duty of the agrestic serfs in the villages to perform do-

47. Cf. 'Slavery' *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*.

48. Sharma R. Op. cit. p. 132.

49. Nieboer Op. cit. pp. 34-39.

50. Ganshoff F. L. *Feudalism*, London, 1952. p. 9.

51. Ibid., p. 20.

mestic duties in their masters' households apart from work on the land. The position of a serf was often no better than that of a slave and sometimes even worse, for he was in many cases passed along with the land. Village serfdom comprising of a class of landless labourers, is an institution of old standing in India, spread over nearly all the parts of the country, and while slavery has been extinguished, serfdom still persists to this day especially in those regions where low and untouchable castes are widespread.<sup>52</sup>

Although the institution dates from a period far earlier than that of Akbar, we have evidence to show that serfs as a class multiplied in Moghul India and attained great prominence in the economic life of the country by the sixteenth century.<sup>53</sup> The serf, though usually attached to the soil, was not always so, for in India, as it was in Mediaeval Europe there are records of domestic serfs. Thus Sir. George Macmunn mentions about domestic serfdom still persisting in some of the regions of Rajputana where feudalism had developed right from early mediaeval times. "To this day in India", he writes, "in old-world parts of Rajputana there is an hereditary domestic serfdom subject to no legal compulsion however, in which certain castes gladly serve in hereditary menial or semi-menial capacities, the same families".<sup>54</sup>

In Malabar, we have evidence given by William Logan of a class of agrestic slaves or serfs in the rural areas, called the Cherumars.<sup>55</sup> The Cherumars, besides working on the land of their masters, were often forced to work as domestics in the households of their landlords. The deplorable inhuman conditions under which the Cherumars lived and worked are graphically pictured by D. R. Banaji. They were a class of creatures subjected to the lowest depths of degradation and suffering the worst kind of treatment at the hands of their masters.<sup>56</sup>

52. Mukherjee Radhakamal: *The Economic History of India, 1600-1800.* 1945, pp. 69-72.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

54. Sir George Macmunn: *Op. cit.* p. 35.

55. William Logan: *Malabar*, Vol. I. Madras 1951 Cf. also Banaji D. R. *Op. cit.* p. 81.

56. D. R. Banaji. *Op. cit.* pp. 80-132.

L. J. Sedgewick, the Census Superintendent of Bombay Presidency, Census of 1921 has discussed in fairly good detail a class of agricultural serfs called the 'Halis' operating in the Surat, Broach and other districts of the north Bombay Presidency.<sup>57</sup> The Halis were a class of agricultural labourers who had surrendered themselves and their families for a debt, and who were the permanent estate servants of their masters, being hereditarily maintained by them, and provided with food, clothes, and homes. But they were not free to leave their masters, nor were they paid money wages for their work. The Halis were not only made to work on land, but were also responsible for domestic duties in their masters' households.

The Hali's wife had to do all the cleaning, and washing of utensils, and grind corn and fetch water for the master's family for which she was paid in kind. Most of the Halis' families worked for generations under one employer till about the second decade of the present century. It was a system of permanent and unresignable agricultural and domestic service. The conditions of the 'Halis' were by no means good, but they were generally treated well by their masters for fear that they would run away. With the spread of education and the opening up of opportunities for employment in towns and cities, the Hali system has gradually tended to disappear. We are inclined to believe that most of the Gujarati speaking domestic servants in the city of Bombay, working for free wages, were none other than the original Halis of Gujarat a few decades ago, performing the same functions along with agricultural labour in the households of their masters under compulsion.

From this it is evident that on the break-up of feudalism and slavery, therefore, in different parts of the world, the functions that were once performed by serfs and slaves were carried over into the sphere of free-wage labour. When all the resources in land and capital were appropriated, the meanest labour came to be imposed upon those entirely devoid of them.

57. Census of India 1921, Bombay Presidency, Vol. VIII, General Report. pp. 219-223.

It so came about that domestic service fell to the lot of the poorest elements among free labourers from the poverty-stricken rural countryside,<sup>58</sup> who, made poor by fortuitous circumstances hired themselves out to the members of the well-to-do classes. It should be made clear here that the material and social conditions of the household workers remained much the same as before, although emancipated from slavery or serfdom. For, instead of the personal compulsion of the feudal and earlier times, there was now an impersonal compulsion.<sup>59</sup> The domestic servants, like other lower grades of labourers remained almost the slaves of the modern capitalist classes whose labour was exploited and subjected, because, they being destitute of all other means of subsistence could be reduced to starvation if the rich refused to give them work.

Moreover, the occupation of the domestic worker differed from that of labourers in other form of employment, in that, while the latter became less and less personalised and moved further and further away from the home as a result of industrialism and concerned itself with the production of goods, domestic service, which involved the rendering of personal services, was the only occupation which remained within the home. As a result of the menial nature of the services it rendered, it retained its inferior social status, while labour outside the home, in factories and elsewhere, began to acquire greater importance and preference. And, with the persistence of the feudal notions of indignity attached to domestic work, the domestic servant continued to accept it as the lowest type of occupation.

In spite of their very inferior social status, the domestic servants have always formed an integral part of the social life of the people of various countries, although they began to receive attention as a class of workers only in the recent times and that too only in some of the countries of the West. For example in England the domestic servant has appeared in its literature as a social type in several instances. But the detailed history of the conditions of the domestic servants as a class in England could

58. Cf. 'Domestic Service,' *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*.

59. Cf. Nieboer. *Op. cit.* pp. 420-422.

be traced back only up to the eighteenth century with a certain amount of definiteness.

The information available about the domestic servants of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century England and the changes in their working and living conditions from time to time, forms a subject of absorbing interest for the purpose of a study like the present one, owing to its historical and comparative value. In view of this, it deserves more or less a detailed treatment. J. Jean Hecht<sup>60</sup> made the first serious attempt to study the composition, size and structure and the working and living conditions of the class of the domestic servants of the eighteenth century from the literature available of that period. It cannot be denied that the domestic servants formed an important aspect of the social structure of England of that period. Of all the occupational groups that of the domestic servants was perhaps the largest. The development of the modern capitalistic economy that accompanied the expansion of commerce and industry in the eighteenth century and the consequent growth of the middle classes, with an increase in individual fortunes gave a stimulus to the demand for household servants in England.

It was an ardent desire of the newly grown rich middle classes to imitate the traditional upper classes in every possible manner. Domestic servants being an evidence of wealth and luxury, always above comfort margin, gained increased significance among nearly all the classes of society. The nobility and the gentry, to meet the competition from the middle classes in their display of wealth found it necessary to maintain large retinues of servants. Even the lower artisans and petty tradesmen began to keep servants. The size of the domestic staff, in the upper class households, although relatively much smaller than that in the mediaeval manors and castles of lords and dukes, where it sometimes ran into five to six hundreds, was very large compared to modern standards. It was a common sight to find 30 or 40 servants in a nobleman's household in the eighteenth century, whereas a large upper middle-class household normally maintained 18 to 20 servants and in a lower income household were found 3 to 4 do-

60. J. Jean Hecht: *The Domestic Servant Class In Eighteenth Century England*, London 1956.

mestics. One-servant households belonged to a still lower stratum of families. In the rural areas the number of servants was much less than in London itself.

The labour force in domestic service was chiefly supplied by the children of the agricultural servants and labourers to the city. Good servants were obtained by the large landholders from their own tenantry. The London working classes were considered of ill-repute for domestic work. The artisan class of the rural areas also supplied servants along with the agrarian population. But we do hear of children of lesser shopkeepers and merchants taking up domestic service in upper class households, and distant impoverished relatives of peers and gentlemen working as domestic servants were not unknown. Thus the servant class comprised of members of various social levels and included also foreigners like Negroes from Africa and America and Indians from Asia.

Domestic service especially in upper class households was the most coveted occupation for the children of the rural farm servants for it provided refuge, security and a means of acquiring social status and even economic and social advancement. The idle and luxurious life of a livery servant in upper class households in the city of London in the eighteenth century has become almost proverbial. Of course this was not so for the servants of middle-class households, which created a shortage of supply of servants in this category of households.

One striking feature of the domestic servant class in this century is the existence of distinct gradations among the domestics based on the nature of work that a servant performed. In each household domestics were graded as upper and lower domestics. The former possessed special skills and their functions were supervisory and executive, while the latter had their activities controlled and directed and were of an unskilled or manual variety. These distinctions of rank among the servants were visible in their living quarters, wages, dress, diet, leisure activities etc. The lower servants had to wear livery as a mark of subordination while the upper ones wore ordinary clothes. The status of the servant was also determined according as his functions brought him nearer to the person of his master, or kept him at a distance. Greater dignity attached to the former. Again, the servants

of the nobility and the gentry looked down upon those of the middle and mercantile classes.

On the whole, the status of the domestic servant was considered rather demeaning and a stigma of servility did attach to a majority of the servant class especially the lower class of servants and the conspicuously idle domestics in livery for contributing nothing to productive labour. But in spite of that it was a popular occupation for both men and women of the poorer classes which may indicate that the stigma was of a mild nature. The domestic servants of the eighteenth century were a comparatively happy lot. "There appears to have been none of the gloomy discontent", says Hecht, "none of the acute sense of degradation or personal indignity so common among servants in more recent times."<sup>61</sup> It should be remembered however, that the servants of the nobility and the gentry were free of all taint and enjoyed a certain measure of repute in accordance with the status of those they served.

The general contentment of the domestic servants of this century in England may be attributed to the superior quality of housing conditions, diet and clothing provided to them in comparison to what is found at a later date. A large number of apartments were set aside in the upper class establishments for men and women, upper and lower domestics, although the same could not be said for domestics in smaller households. The comfort of the domestics was always in the mind of the employers even if they could not afford luxury, and on the whole they were well-housed. They were also well-fed and partook of all the delicacies of their master's kitchen, especially in the upper class households. The servants of the middle-classes, however, did not enjoy such good diet. In matter of clothing we are informed that livery servants received new clothes from their masters, while others generally received old clothes. The appearance of the servant was a greater concern of his or her master than any other item, and employers often insisted that their servants should be very well-dressed. Servants of this period were therefore dressed in the gayest colours, ornaments, cuffs, laces, silks etc., and very often it was difficult to distinguish the maid from the mistress.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 177.



This tendency was to be found among the servants of both the upper and the middle strata of employers.

The recreational activities of the servants, as enumerated by Hecht, indicate that they enjoyed a considerable amount of recreation and had a well developed social life of their own, and very often mingled with other occupational groups.

Apart from boarding and lodging facilities of a high order, the servants received wages and other incidentals, like the tea money, beer money, the well-known vails in the course of their service. This enabled them in many cases, to effect good savings and service thus became a profitable occupation enabling them to rise in the social scale. In several instances we hear of servants setting up a business on retirement out of the capital accumulated during the years of service, though this may not have been possible for a great majority of the servant class who were noted for their frivolities and recklessness in spending money in pursuit of fashions which were imitated by other sections of the population.

The domestic servants of this period were noted for their high sense of individualism and insubordination. Although we hear of servants being caned, cuffed or slapped many rebelled against this treatment. We hear of servants forming themselves into organized groups against the employer class and resorting to aggression whenever the welfare of their occupation seemed to be threatened. On the other hand we are informed of the appeals made to the Parliament by employers to check the insubordination of servants by proper legislation. There is also a mention of an organization variously named as the Society for the Encouragement of Good Servants, the Society for the 'Encrease' and Encouragement of Good Servants, and the British Society for Rewarding Servants being founded in London in 1789 with the object of promoting constancy and fidelity in servants by raising a fund for the relief of those, who, because of illness or infirmity, could no longer work.<sup>62</sup>

While on the one hand we have evidence of conflicts between the employer and the servant, on the other hand there is ample testimony to paternal treatment meted out to the domes-

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

tics by benevolent employers who treated them with care and attention in times of sickness, looked after their spiritual needs, provided them facilities for education, gave them good pensions on retirement for long years of service, and even left them handsome legacies after death, which may be indicative of the mediaeval tradition of family feeling retaining a certain amount of vitality in the master-servant relationship.

We get information about conditions of domestic servants in the nineteenth century from Charles Booth's famous survey of London Industries towards the close of the century.<sup>63</sup> With industrialism making headway, we find an appreciable change in domestic service as an occupation. Here we do not find mention of families keeping 30 and 40 servants as the general mode as in the previous century, for the families with more than four servants were very few.

Booth has dealt separately with male and female domestics as he found wide variations between the two types. Female servants were classified into three types; the lowest group found in lower middle or well-paid labouring class single-servant places; a middle group of better class of servants also in single-servant houses, and the third upper group serving middle as well as upper class households. The lower group of servants consisted chiefly of daughters of casual labourers and came from very poor environment but had received a certain amount of training in work-house schools. The middle group of servants were children of artisans, policemen etc., and came from better surroundings. They were usually young women who worked in factories and turned to domestic work only when factory work was slack. Preferring the smaller wage and the comparative freedom of factory life they returned to it as soon as they got an opportunity. Thus it is at this stage that we find industrialism beginning to encroach upon the domain of domestic service. This particular class of servants was noted for its independent spirit.

The young servant's life in the one-servant households, where the lady of the house supervised, was very lonely, dull and monotonous and was burdened with hard work, although this was not

63. Charles Booth: *Life And Labour Of The People In London*, Second Series London 1903. Vol. IV pp. 212-230.

often the case in comfortable middle class homes with 3 or 4 servants. The treatment received by these servants varied from house to house. There were cases where utmost kindness was shown while there were others where no consideration was shown to the poor servants. The one thing that made life worth living for this lower class of servants was one whole day's holiday in a month. There was a general demand for more Sundays and evenings out.

The servants of the upper classes were usually accomplished persons and possessed certain skills like dress-making and hair-dressing. They were graded in ranks according to the functions performed and very often received promotions in the same household.

As for housing accommodation the women servants in larger upper class households were fairly well-off though the same could not be said of men servants whose comfort received little consideration. Sleeping arrangements for servants in poorer class households were very indifferent though slightly better than what was found in their own homes. The kitchen was the only sitting-room for these servants. Usually the servants' rooms even in upper class houses were dull and cheerless.

The quality of food given to servants, though depending on the generosity of the employer, was in almost all cases very good, and much superior to what the working class families from which servants were drawn, were accustomed to. In upper class households where domestics were divided into upper and lower grades, *the lower ones generally received a poorer fare at the hands of a stern housekeeper.*

The servants of the nineteenth century were much more plainly dressed than those of the previous one. They usually wore washable cotton material during the day and changed to black or dark coloured dresses with white apron, stiff collar, cuffs and cap in the afternoons. Most of them were allowed money for washing. The wages of lower class and upper class servants varied and rose with age owing to frequent change of places to "better themselves". Different scales of pay were offered in wealthier establishments, with the cooks and cook housekeeper (with the

exception of lady's maid in rare cases) heading the list and the kitchen maid at the bottom of it.

Domestic service from the monetary point of view was lucrative and in some cases even luxurious, which enabled the young servant to send home help from her own earnings. But unlike in the previous century it was not popular because of the restraints it imposed upon the servant's life, and the personal character of the master-servant relationship which might not always have been a happy one.

There is mention of a Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants in this period. It was a protective institution which received girls coming from work-house schools after obtaining a rudimentary training in domestic work; and placed them in suitable situations after due inquiries as to work required, sleeping accommodation, minimum wages, time out on Sunday etc., and after obtaining a signed form from the employer. The servant's career was kept under careful record by a visiting officer of the association and further training was offered to failures. The association provided lodging arrangement for servants out of place and looked after the girls well, and maintained a sick fund for the domestics. It had also its private registry offices all over the city to provide the servants with suitable situations. There was also a Girls' Friendly Society in the city of London for working and servant girls which also had registration offices and lodging-homes for young girls, who were made to feel that they were not entirely friendless in the vast metropolis.

As for men domestic servants we find a gradual disappearance of this class of servants during this period from all except the most wealthy families. This was due to several factors. Men servants lacked adaptability so necessary for a servant and considered themselves specialists. Besides, fashion no longer demanded a display of men in livery at the door-step; and most of the duties performed by men in the previous century were taken over by maid servants at lower wages though with less efficiency.

The men servants that did exist in the upper class households were graded in ranks from the steward's boy to footman, from footman to valet or butler and from butler to steward. Wages paid to men servants were very high, almost more than

double the amount paid to women servants. Livery servants were provided with livery suits by the employer who also paid for their washings.

As a class men servants were not as overworked as the women which was a general observation of Booth. Their life was more easy-going with the absence of hard work, which led them to take to drinking and betting. Their only discomfort perhaps was with respect to sleeping arrangements. They were lodged in the basement where three or four servants shared one room, or even had to sleep in the pantry or beneath the stairs. The women servants were better accommodated in their rooms at the top of the house.

Domestics in upper class households were divided into three categories and were named "kitchen", "hall", and "room" according to the places where they took their meals; the kitchen being at the bottom of the scale and the room (housekeeper's) at the top. One change that was taking place during this period was the increasing tendency on the part of the employers to pay board-wages throughout the year instead of providing food which considerably reduced the cost to masters and mistresses.

Booth mentioned the fact that attempts were made with very little success to organize domestic servants on trade union lines. There existed a London and Provincial Domestic Servants' Union but with feeble support; and there was also a Gentlemen Servants' Mutual Aid Association which was only an employment agency. A Domestic Servants' Pension Fund is also reported in the nineteenth century.

The structure composition and conditions of labour of the domestic servant class in the twentieth century London differ substantially from what prevailed in the previous centuries. We have information on this class of workers upto to the third decade of the century in the *New Survey of London Life and Labour* conducted under the directorship of Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith.<sup>64</sup> Domestic service in private households had by then undergone an appreciable change. It had lost much of its previous elaborate-

64. Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith: *New Survey of London Life and Labour*, 1931. pp. 427-455. Vol. II.

ness and complexity and had reduced considerably in magnitude to nearly half of what was there in Booth's time owing to the competition of factories although it still remained an important industry giving employment to a large number of women who formed an overwhelming majority of the employees. Men servants constituted a negligible minority in the domestic labour force. One-servant households formed a great majority while those which employed more than 4 servants were a very small proportion of the whole. One important feature to be noted about domestic service was the emergence of a class of non-resident servants.

The opening of the century saw the increasing interest shown by the servant-keeping class to improve the conditions and status of domestic servants in their anxiety to check the growing reduction in numbers, which led to the formation of Domestic Servants' Society under aristocratic auspices in 1912. In 1911 the first attempt was made to organize domestic servants for the purpose of insurance in a self governing body after the introduction of National Health Insurance.

A general reluctance to enter residential domestic service was already observed in Booth's time. With the opening up of a wider variety of occupations for women in the present century we find this reluctance all the greater, with the result the demand for resident servants had long exceeded the supply in London. This had led to a substantial rise in money wages especially in one-servant and two-servant households as was observed by the New London Survey. The other conditions of service also showed a marked improvement in the first quarter of this century.

Accommodation for the resident servant was made more attractive and comfortable by modern mistresses. Even gramophones and wireless were provided in some cases. Food was even better than what was reported by Booth and "Beer money" had disappeared. Hours of duty were shorter which was due to labour saving devices and changes of social habit. Gas, electrical gadgets, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and various soaps and polishes and other cleaning devices cut down much of the labour for the domestic worker. Even the labour of cooking had been lessened with the introduction of several varieties of canned food

preparations. Besides all these improvements, there had been a growing recognition of the feelings of the servant and a general elevation in her status.

Before entering service a servant made conditions for fixed hours of work and hours off-duty. The hours of commencing and finishing their work were also stipulated and extra work was paid. The servants' leisure was appreciably increased, and mistresses had less control over the leisure time of their servants. With better pay, the domestic servant was as well-dressed as the other workers of her class and the servants' clothes had by then replaced the cheaper stuff of the last century.

Much of this information regarding conditions of service pertained to the servants of middle and upper-middle-class households. It was not fully applicable to servants of the large wealthier establishments where service was always of a skilled nature and carried with it certain traditions. Also the wealthier families had not felt the scarcity of servants as acutely as the middle-class families. It was the households with limited means that had been affected where there were formerly one or two servants.

As a result of this there had sprung up a growing demand for part-time or even full-time daily workers in families who could not afford residential service. The modern average family being smaller, the size of the household with bed-room accommodation being limited, and the need for domestic help especially of the residential type being diminished, it gradually became necessary to employ non-resident domestic servants. The hours of work of the non-resident worker were much more limited and the majority of this type of workers refused work on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Non-resident domestic work was generally preferred by the London girls where hours of work were fixed and there was complete freedom outside work hours.

Each decade of the present century has witnessed a change in the size of the servant class in England and in the servant-keeping habits of the employer class. And the improvement in the status and conditions of the domestic workers in private households has kept pace with this change. Between the census years 1931 and 1951 the number of domestic servants had been considerably reduced. For instance, as observed by Marsh, "in

1931 there were 262,000 males and 1,119,000 females employed in resident and non-resident private domestic service in England and Wales but in 1951 there were only 94,000 males and 349,000 females, a decrease in the total of nearly 70 per cent".<sup>65</sup> This has been due to various factors among which were the growth of industries which attracted large sections of the labouring population owing to different conditions of work they offered which led to a decline in the popularity of domestic service. Conditions of war necessitated the diversion of labour from non-essential to essential industries, and the rising levels of taxation made it difficult for a large number of employers to be able to afford domestic help. This accounted for drastic reductions in numbers of a once flourishing industry. Domestic service, especially of the resident type had almost disappeared by 1951. Thus writes Marsh, "In 1931 nearly 5 per cent of all the households in England and Wales employed a 'resident domestic,' by 1951 about one per cent of all households had resident servants. . . . The proportion of households with three or more resident domestic servants fell from 0.4 per cent . . . in 1931 to 0.02 per cent . . . in 1951. To some extent the 'resident' may have been replaced by the 'daily help,' but the mid-twentieth century English household is, compared with the nineteenth century, relatively servantless".<sup>66</sup>

Alarmed at the rapid disappearance of domestic workers from the social structure of the country, and recognising the high degree of social significance of domestic service, England has been making frantic efforts to bring about an improvement in the standard of the conditions offered to this class of workers in order to raise the status of the occupation in the eyes of the public and to bring it in line with other occupations.<sup>67</sup> Right since 1919 enquiries have been made under the initiative of the Ministry of Labour which appointed committees to investigate into the servant problem. As a result of these enquiries public thought was directed towards recognising the social value of

65. Marsh D.C.: *The Changing Social Structure of England and Wales 1871-1951*, London 1958, p. 116.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

67. The information regarding the status of Domestic Work in England today is obtained from a report given by Dorothy M. Elliott, Chairman of the National Institute of Houseworkers in the *International Labour Review*, Feb. 1951. Vol. LXIII—No. 2.



the work of the domestic servant on the part of the National Federation of Women Workers and the Worker's Union. Efforts began to be made to organise domestic workers in order to improve their position. The National Union of Domestic Workers was formed in 1938. A Domestic Workers' Employment Bureau was sponsored, through which only those employers prepared to offer specified conditions of employment could be introduced to workers.<sup>68</sup> Domestic workers were compulsorily insured against sickness under the National Insurance Act of 1911, and also against unemployment under the National Insurance Act of 1946 along with workers in all other trades and industries. A National Institute of House Workers was set up by the Government in June 1946 at the instance of the famous Markham-Hancock report.<sup>69</sup> "The establishment of a national standard of skill and efficiency", writes Dorothy Elliott, "allied to conditions of employment for those who reach that standard, was the first step taken by the Board of Directors of the National Institute of Houseworkers to achieve this end. The standard of skill was to be recognised by the award of the diploma of the Institute . . . The training was to have two main aims", she continues, "to turn out a domestic worker skilled in her craft; and to give to that worker a sense of confidence in herself as a member of the community, breaking down the idea that domestic workers are a race apart".<sup>70</sup> Thus a scheme for the training of domestic workers which included practical training in house-craft and general education was prepared and centres organised by the Institute were set up all over the country. Standards of employment were also worked out by the institute. The conditions provided for a minimum wage, for a maximum working week of 48 hours for the resident adult workers, and 44 hours for the non-resident adult workers. The hours of work for the the juvenile workers were 44 a week for the resident and 40 a week for the non-resident. A higher scale of wages was stipulated for the non-resident worker to cover the cost of board and residence. Overtime for adult workers was to be paid at the rate of time and quarter for the first 3 hours and time and a half

68. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

there after. Juveniles were not to be permitted to work overtime. Every worker was entitled to one full day and one half day off each week, or if mutually agreed, to 3 half days a week. After six months' work, all workers were to be given one week's leave with pay or two weeks after 12 months. After five years' work as an associate member, the worker was to be entitled to 3 weeks' holiday with pay. Workers were also entitled to public holidays, or a day off in stead. If, however, they surrendered a public holiday at the request of the householder, they were entitled to an alternative day, and to be paid overtime rates for any hours worked beyond 4 hours on the public holiday.

Conditions for accommodation were also laid down. Every resident worker must be provided with an adequately heated bedroom and sitting room or a bed-sitting room. Facilities for entertaining should be given to the resident worker at her own expense. The wearing of the necessary well-cut uniform and cap by the worker during working hours was also laid down. The Board of Directors laid down standards in regard to references too. The training set up by the Institute was regarded as part of the government's vocational training scheme. The training centres were to maintain registers of all employers who desired to have trained workers under the conditions laid down. "The underlying principle of all placing done by the Institute was that the personal qualities and temperament of both employer and worker should be studied in order to ensure a right personal relationship between them", writes D. M. Elliott.<sup>71</sup>

Similar efforts were made to standardize the conditions of employment of the daily-workers. Payment for the daily service was to be made on an hourly basis. The daily worker, whether full or part-time was to be paid a guaranteed weekly wage whether or not work was found for her for the number of hours laid down in the contract; and she was to be given holidays with pay and certain sickness benefits. The charge made to householders covered the cost of the worker's wages, provision for holidays and sick pay, the employer's insurance liability and the administrative overheads.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

The standards and conditions of employment for domestic workers published by the Institute on March 1947 were favourably received by the general public. The provisions for minimum wages, hours of work, holidays, overtime, were accepted by the employers who also appreciated the idea of providing a comfortable, attractive room to the resident worker which was supposed to be her home. In this manner after a long process of trial and error the domestic workers and the services rendered by them to the nation, have gained due recognition in English society and have been raised to a status appreciably higher than that endured a century ago by their predecessors.

The detailed narration of the historical development of the occupation of the domestic servants and the conditions it has offered to the workers in England for the last three centuries, arouses our curiosity to peep into the conditions as they prevail for the workers in another important country of the West, viz., the United States. It should, however, be remembered at the outset that little information is available regarding the conditions obtaining in the occupation of the household workers in the United States of America previous to the present century. Domestic service was the direct out growth from slavery in this country which is reflected in the present structure of the occupation in which there is a preponderance of Negroes over white workers. In fact one of the essential items related to the employment of domestic servants is the proportion of Negroes in the population. Thus write C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Bowman, "The American pattern . . . is distinctive in that the frequency of servants is correlated with the availability of Negroes in local populations . . ."<sup>72</sup> The low status of the occupation and the stigma attached to it, account for the great reluctance of white women to enter domestic service. It is for this caste prejudice that we find larger number of families employing servants in the southern states which were once the home of Negro slavery and where even today Negroes form a significant proportion of the

72. C. Arnold Anderson And Mary Jean Bowman: *The Vanishing Servant And The Contemporary Status System Of The American South*, *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. LIX No. 3, November 1953, pp. 115-230.

population, than in the northern states where domestic labour is twice as expensive and is resorted to chiefly by foreign-born immigrants.

Domestic service in America as in other countries of Europe is an occupation declining in importance. Nevertheless it is still one of the major occupations for women for it employes about one tenth of all women workers. It is essentially a women's occupation where 98 per cent of the workers employed are women, men forming only about 2 per cent of the total.<sup>73</sup> It is reported that women entering domestic service are chiefly those who are widowed, divorced, or separated or whose husbands are absent for some reason or the other. The men who take up domestic work are employed at outdoor jobs as lawn-cutters, yardmen, handymen, odd-job men, chauffeurs or gardeners. Between the years 1900 and 1950, the numbers employed in domestic service decreased with minor fluctuations during the decades 1920 - 1940. With the second world war there has been a marked reduction in household workers who have constantly been drifting away from household employment to better-paid and better-organised employments in factories and other establishments like laundries, restaurants and garment-works. Much of the change in the occupation has come about with the commercializing of such operations as laundry work, tailoring and cooking, which were formerly performed in the home. This has been the chief factor leading to a shortage of domestic workers which has become serious in big cities. While in 1900 there was one servant for every 13 families, in 1950 there was one for about 25 families. With the rising cost of living, hiring of domestic help has become a financial burden on the moderate income middle-class families especially those with small children, and aged persons. It has become an increasing tendency especially in city apartments for the services of one worker to be shared by several families on a part-time basis.

73. Alice K. Leopold: *Hand Book On Women Workers*: U.S. Dept. of Labour Women's Bureau. 1956. Also Cf. Frieda S. Miller. *Household Employment in the U.S.* *International Labour Review*. Vol. LXVI No. 4, October 1952. Information on the present conditions in the U.S. has been chiefly obtained from this Report.

The unpopularity of the occupation in the United States is due to various factors the most important among which are economic and social disadvantages under which the job conditions place the household worker. Even at the present moment conditions in domestic employment are mostly determined by the individual bargaining between the housewives and the women seeking work. "There is no government-sponsored household employment programme in the United States to promote the same standards as are found in industry",<sup>74</sup> wrote Frieda Miller in 1953. Writing in 1956 the director of Women's Bureau U.S. Dept. of Labour says the same thing that, legislation has, on the whole tended to exclude this important group of workers.<sup>75</sup>

Owing to absence of any legislation regulating the conditions of service, the worker in a private household is obliged to work long hours. This applies more especially to resident workers who are subject to exploitation with respect to working hours. This is perhaps one of the reasons deterring good workers from taking up work in private households where they have to "live in". Only two states, Washington and Alaska have legislation limiting the hours of work for domestic servants to 60 a week.

With regard to wages also there are wide variations. Although much higher wages are paid to household servants in big cities like New York, than in other places, still on an average domestic work remains the most poorly paid occupation in the U.S. along with agriculture. One or two meals are provided to most household workers who are also paid travelling expenses. Resident workers receive all meals along with living quarters. Only two states, Wisconsin and Alaska have some legislation regarding minimum wages for workers in this field.

Among other disadvantages faced by household workers are less security as regards job tenure, seniority rights, unemployment insurance or compensation for injury on job, than that enjoyed by workers in other industries and services. This is one of the reasons for constant shifting on the part of the workers from one job to another. Only in one city, New York, there is

74. Frieda Miller *Op. cit.* p. 328.

75. Alice K. Leopold *Op. cit.*

legislation regarding unemployment and workmen's compensation for domestic workers under stipulated conditions. In California it is only regarding workmen's compensation. Perhaps the one important single step towards raising the status of household workers in the United States through legislation is the extension of the Social Security Act in 1950 to include all groups of domestic workers for old-age and survivor's benefits.

Although legislation is absent in connection with many of the major aspects of the conditions of domestic employment, nevertheless the importance of the services of the competent domestic worker to family life (especially in those families where the mother also goes to work) and to national well-being has been gaining good recognition in non-governmental circles. Efforts have been made on the part of local community groups and women's organisations in various states for improving wages and working conditions for household workers. The public employment offices although lacking authority to impose standards on either workers or employers have been quite influential in improving wages and working conditions including living quarters for household workers by recommending the necessary standards to housewives seeking domestic help. But such type of voluntary standards are effective only when there is a shortage of labour. In times of labour surplus there is a tendency for women seeking employment to accept substandard jobs.

Since 1915 the Young Women's Christian Association all over the country has been making efforts to draw the attention of the public to the problems facing household employment by holding conferences and appointing commissions to study the conditions of domestic workers. The National Women's Trade Union League, the National Consumer's League and other national organisations of women have also been orienting their attention towards considering specific problems of domestic workers. The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Dept. of Labour called a Conference on Household Employment round about 1946 which concentrated mainly on formulation of standards for working conditions but the results were rather insufficient compared to the time and effort expended.

In some local communities certain organizations of the household employers or workers' unions were formed as in Chicago.

In Washington D. C. there has been a domestic worker's union active for 16 years. According to the rules of the union a form of agreement has to be signed by both employer and worker. The union also maintains registers of workers. On the whole, however, little headway has been made in the direction of improving the standards of working conditions in this field of occupation by non-legislative methods.

All the same one significant fact to be noted in the United States towards improving the efficiency of domestic workers is the training in household employment provided through vocational courses within the public school system. Courses in home economics including cooking, menu planning and food buying, sewing and child care are given in public secondary schools all over the United States but the main purpose is to train girls for the management of their own homes rather than for taking up household employment. Household employment committees have also occasionally, in individual communities, attempted to provide training courses for house workers. Borstal institutions and orphanages too, are known to impart similar training in household duties to children under their care.

It is interesting to note that one type of household work, baby-sitting has become an important source of income for high school students in the United States though the latter may not be experienced, nor qualified for his responsible type of work.

Frieda S. Miller makes special mention of a school in California which has developed courses in household specialities — Lady's maid, cook, butler — for adults of 18 or over, which have attracted a fairly large number of men and women, Negro and White.

In spite of all these efforts to raise the competency of domestic workers in the United States, it is reported that students prefer to train themselves for branches of occupation other than domestic service and show greater reluctance to enter service, for as mentioned before, domestic service has no definite standards of working conditions, backed by legislation, nor adequate status to offer to the workers taking up this employment.

The above surveys of the conditions for domestic workers as they prevail in the two countries of the West show that while

England has gone far ahead towards more or less completely standardizing the occupation of domestic service, the United States have also been made alive, to a certain extent, to the problems facing the occupation. Even if the Federal legislation has not taken into consideration the question of the domestic workers, except in one instance viz., that of bringing the workers under the Social Security Act, the local communities and associations in different states have been stirred up by the shortage of the supply of domestic servants, and give due attention to the welfare and status of the workers concerned. Also, schemes of survey and research into the problems of domestic service have been undertaken <sup>has already</sup> by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labour. The stage has been thus set in every possible way for the government to step in to bring the occupation under legislative control.

Other countries of the West too have not been wanting in their efforts to protect domestic workers in some manner or the other and bring their occupation under social control, although there may not be any uniformity of approach and method.

Thus in Sweden we are told, there is a Home Assistants' Act regulating the working and leisure time of the workers, providing compensation and care in the event of illness or injury and assuring the workers' right to decent lodging. There is a growing appreciation for the value of household work and adequate facilities for research are provided for the purpose. "Public opinion in Sweden", writes Brita Akerman Johansson, "is beginning to realise more and more that all tasks in a home can be of equal social importance and that skilled persons following the occupation of home help should be regarded as the equal members of other occupations".<sup>76</sup> In fact Sweden is the one country where no stigma attaches to the occupation of domestic service.

In Germany the status of the domestic workers has been fixed by social legislation and the workers are organized into trade unions. Switzerland also gives legislative protection to the domestic servants and in Russia large numbers of them are or-

76. Brita Akerman Johansson: 'Domestic Workers in Sweden,' *International Labour Review*, April 1953, pp. 356-366, Vol. LXVII.



ganized.<sup>77</sup> France has developed standards of work through collective bargaining between employers and domestic workers. In Hungary an ordinance of 5 August 1947 of the Hungarian Ministry of Social Welfare regulated the conditions of work of domestic employees and occasional domestic workers. Regulations to determine the conditions of work of domestic employees were issued in Bulgaria on 29 Oct. 1947. The authorities of the Labour Directorate are responsible for enforcement of the regulations.<sup>78</sup> Domestic servants are also included under social security legislations of France, Italy, Belgium, the Dominican Republic and Yugoslavia.<sup>79</sup>

Against the background of the conditions as they prevail in the West outlined above, India presents a poor picture. The domestic servant in India is a worker unprotected by any legislation so far as his working conditions are concerned, and left outside any scheme of social security. Domestic service in this country is absolutely individualistic and entirely unorganised, offering few or no standards to the workers taking it up, who do so very often only as the last resort under extreme economic stress.

"The years between 1942 and 1952 witnessed a remarkable extension in the scope and content of labour legislation,"<sup>80</sup> says the I.L.O. Report on the Labour Legislation in India. But in every branch of legislation the domestic servants are conspicuous by their absence. They are covered neither by the Minimum Wages Act of 1948 hailed as a "new landmark in Indian labour legislation"<sup>81</sup> which fixed rates of wages in a number of employments where the worker has no bargaining power to secure a living wage, nor by the new Factory Act of 1948 which introduced a 48-hour week and annual holidays with pay. The Child Labour laws do not apply to child domestic workers. The Employees' State Insurance Act of 1948 which was "the first attempt to introduce an integrated system of health, maternity

77. 'Domestic Service.' *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*.

78. *International Labour Review*, LVII, June, 1948.

79. 'Post War Trends In Social Security,' *International Labour Review*, June, 1949, Vol. LIX, Pp. 668-683.

80. 'Labour Legislation In India. 1937-1952', I.L.O. New Delhi 1952.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

and accident insurance",<sup>82</sup> and inaugurated a new era in the field of Social Insurance legislation in India, excluded the domestic workers from its scope, for it was meant only for a specified class of wage-earners.

Recognising the importance of household labour the International Labour Office convened a meeting of experts in 1951 to study the problems of improving the conditions of employment and raising the status of domestic workers. The report of the meeting was published in the I.L.O.'s publication, "Industry And Labour" Volume VI No. 7 in October 1951. Some advance in the direction has already been effected in some of the Western countries, as we saw above, but India has lagged far behind.

We may observe, therefore, that a loophole has been left in the structure of a democratic society like ours where a large and important class of workers has remained unprotected by the benefits that accrue from organization and legislation.

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82. Ibid. p. 59.

## CHAPTER II

### SURVEY AND SAMPLE

THE FIELD of survey for the study of the social and economic conditions of the domestic servant class is confined to the city of Bombay. Before, however, discussing the methods and experiences of the survey in this field, and the nature and composition of the sample proper, it would be more appropriate to review the size of the domestic labour force in the city against the background of a statistical analysis of all India figures with reference to the total servant population in order to appreciate the justification for an enquiry such as the present one.

According to the figures given in the last Census of 1951 there are about 1,424,000 domestic servants in the whole of India, constituting 4.4 per cent of the total number of 32,370,000 persons engaged in all industries and services other than cultivation. This can be seen in the table Ia, which also gives the proportion and distribution of domestic servants in the four major cities of India — Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. We note that Calcutta has the largest number of domestic servants forming 10.8 per cent of its total self-supporting population engaged in industries and services, and 8.2 per cent of the domestic servants in the whole of India. Bombay comes next only to Calcutta so far as the favourableness of the social climate for the employment of domestic servants is concerned. In Bombay there are 86,875 domestic servants of various categories constituting 7 per cent of all the persons in industries and services and 6.1 per cent of the total number of domestic servants all over India. Delhi and Madras have an almost equal, but comparatively smaller proportion of domestic workers, forming 4.4 and 4 per cent respectively of the total working population in these two cities.

Whether there has been an increase or a decrease in the number of domestic servants in India since the previous Census

TABLE 1a

DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS IN INDIA AND IN  
FOUR LEADING CITIES BASED ON THE CENSUS OF 1951

	Total Self-support- ing persons in all industries and ser- vices other than cultivation	Total No. of Do- mestic servants	Percentage to those engaged in industries and ser- vices	Percentage to total No. of domestic servants in the whole of India
The Whole of India	32,370,000	1,424,000	4.4	100
Calcutta	1,080,349	116,872	10.8	8.2
Bombay	1,237,448	86,875	7.0	6.1
Delhi	518,608	23,101	4.4	1.6
Madras	374,416	15,011	4.0	1.05

of 1941, it is difficult to estimate. This is because of the irrelevancy in comparing figures in the two Censuses of 1941 and 1951 owing to the partition of the country in 1948. However, a fairly good idea as to the general increase in the number of domestic servants in the city of Bombay during the last three decades could be had from the table 1b.

We note in the table that between 1921 and 1931 there is a slight decrease in the number of domestic servants. But at the same time there is an increase in the percentage to the total population engaged in all industries and services. This decrease in the numbers may be due to a general decrease in the total number of persons in all industries and services as explained by the Census Superintendent of 1931.<sup>1</sup> From 1931 to 1941 there is an increase in the number of servants, although the proportion to the total working population remains the same. Between 1941 and 1951 we find that the number of domestic servants shoots up

1. Census of India 1931; Cities of the Bombay Presidency.

TABLE 1b

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS  
BETWEEN THE YEARS 1921—1951 IN THE CITY OF BOMBAY

Census Year	Male Domestic Servants	Female Domestic Servants	Total No. of Domestic Servants	Percentage to the total No. of persons engaged in all industries and services
Bombay City 1921	33,695	8,860	42,555	5.8
Bombay City 1931	34,117	6,180	40,297	6.9
Bombay City 1941	39,000	8,900	47,900	6.9
Greater Bombay 1951	65,784	21,091	86,875	7.0

from 47,900 to 86,875 which means that it has almost doubled itself, although the proportion to the total population engaged in industries and services has increased by only 0.1 per cent. This significant increase in the number of domestic servants in Bombay from 1941 to 1951 may be due to a spectacular increase in the total population of Bombay by about 67.5 per cent during this decade. Also, the data for 1951 give the figures for Greater Bombay which includes the suburban area with the city, whereas the data of the previous decades refer only to the city of Bombay. Hence the big increase in the servant population as seen in the table.

It could be gathered from the above two tables that, (i) domestic servants in India constitute not a negligible proportion of the total number of persons engaged in all industries and services, (ii) their proportion in the major cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras is quite significant, (iii) in Bombay, atleast, there has been an appreciable increase in their numbers in the

last decade. It has already been pointed out in chapter I that owing to the very nature of the personal relationship involved in domestic service, there is no government-sponsored household employment programme in India for this large class of workers, to bring about similar standards of labour as are found in other industries, as a result of which they are left with less protection through legislation than workers in any other non-agricultural occupation in this country.

When therefore, the standards and rewards of labour in an important field of activity like domestic service, where men workers form a large majority,<sup>2</sup> remain completely unregulated, it naturally calls for an enquiry into the subject. As already mentioned above there has been as yet no systematic research of any significance made into the problems facing domestic service and the workers engaged in the occupation. With the result, the very absence of any material on this subject when suggested to me, aroused my curiosity to make a first hand investigation into the nature of the occupation of domestic service and the problems confronting the workers in the field with a given set of conditions of employment in the city of Bombay.

After preliminary talks with some of the domestic servants it was found necessary not to confine the scope of the survey only to the occupational aspects of the subject, by merely studying the domestic servants as working mechanisms in the social structure performing a certain set of functions under given working conditions. But it was deemed desirable to study them as human beings belonging to the wider community, with their interests and attitudes, likes and dislikes, their grievances and natural aspirations, their educational attainments and recreational habits, their social and civil status, and a general background of the economic condition of their families. In other words it became the aim of the survey to study from a sociological angle the extent to which domestic service as an occupation affects the general life and living conditions of the workers engaged in it, and is in turn affected by them.

The method adopted for the study was purely the method

2. In Bombay there are 65784 men and 21091 women domestic servants according to the Census of 1951.

of the Interview, which in the words of Sidney and Beatrice Webb is, "Conversation with a purpose, — a unique instrument of the social investigator."<sup>3</sup> This is because the class with which I was dealing has a large number of illiterate persons. Although the class as such is very ignorant, a deep sensitiveness regarding their inferior position and neglected state, and therefore a great eagerness to take advantage of any scheme which may be of some good to them is not found lacking in this group; and, save for the co-operation and kind help of some among them, my work would have become extremely difficult.

The greatest handicap in my work was in the fact that I was required to meet the servants on their own ground in the absence of their employers whose presence might have deterred them from stating the true facts and who in many cases would have certainly refused me permission to talk to them,<sup>4</sup> thinking that here was something that would put "progressive" ideas into the minds of their servants. This very fact disabled me to follow any hard and fast rules for the purposes of proper sampling which is an important feature of any survey method.

My work of enquiry was therefore restricted to, (i) those full-time resident servants whom I could meet in the servants' quarters which are special rooms in the backside of buildings, allotted to servants in each flat, in such localities as Colaba, Appollo Bunder, Warden Road, and Breach Candy; (ii) those full or part-time servants whom I could approach when they gathered in parks and play-grounds in the evenings in such localities as Colaba, Dadar, Matunga and Mahim, (iii) those part-time non-resident servants in their own chawls and private quarters when they came home for lunch in the afternoon or when they returned home after the day's work was done, in such places as the Goan chawl at Colaba, Municipal Chawls at Chandanwadi and Dhobi Talao, Goan clubs at Dhobi Talao, Jaifalwadi and Bania's chawl at Tardeo and Grant Road, one Mang chawl at Mahim, Chamar chawls at Dadar and the Matunga Labour Camp.

Occasionally I even had to approach small groups of ser-

3. Sidney And Beatrice Webb: *Methods of Social Study*, London, 1932.

4. Some of the employers did refuse me permission in the initial stages of my enquiry.

vants right on the road and after introducing myself and explaining the nature of my enquiry, I started questioning them, and taking down notes behind the wall of some building or under a tree.

The hours of my work were extremely restricted as I could meet the servants only during one or two hours in the afternoon when there was a lull in their work, or one or two hours in the evening when they went out for a stroll.

It was a very adventurous experience as I stealthily went up the back-stairs during quiet afternoon hours in those fashionable buildings at Cuff Parade, Appollo Bunder, and Breach Candy, with many a questioning glance cast at me as to what sort of an intruder I was! Except for a few stray instances where I met with utter indifference and misunderstanding on the part of the servants, generally speaking, I was accorded a warm welcome in the servants' quarters where about half a dozen or more, of the servants gathered around me answering my questions and asking me questions in return. Very often I was mistaken for someone from the Government and it was even asked whether I was a Communist! Some thought I had come to organize a union among them, and those having bitter experiences in the past for taking part in bogus ventures refused to have anything to do with me thinking I had come to make collections and abscond with their money.<sup>5</sup>

Suspicion in the beginning and fear of losing their jobs if their employers came to know that they gave out any information to me, were great obstacles in my way which I had to surmount whenever I confronted them. It was after some persuasion and assurance that some of them submitted themselves to be interviewed. Once they gained confidence and the rapport was established there was little difficulty except that sometimes I was interrupted in the middle of my work and had to wait several minutes with a half-filled schedule when any one of them received a call from his or her master. The greatest fear in some cases was to see me write down in my questionnaire whatever they said and this made many refuse to give out any information. There-

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5. Stray instances of some such imposters in the past were pointed out to me by the servants.



fore in such instances, I just closed down my questionnaire and got all the necessary information by an apparently casual conversation, memorising the whole thing in the meantime, to the utter ignorance of the interviewee.

At one instance I was even told by someone that having taken down all the details about their lives, I might write a book and sell it and make money out of it, so there was no need for them to give me any information about themselves. Such is the deep-seated fear of exploitation in this class! But for such rare occasions, the investigation work in the servants' quarters was, in general, quite interesting and it was not often that I left a place without having been offered a cup of tea, deeply moved by the great hospitality and some of the finer feelings that I detected in this class of workers.

Field-work in the chawls and private tenements of the domestic servants was slightly less difficult as I had not to live in a constant dread of confronting any of their employers over there. But then these chawls were not exclusively inhabited by domestic servants and the difficulty was in picking out my prospective interviewees from a whole row of tenements occupied by industrial labourers and workers from other walks of life. Preceded and followed by a train of small children who helped me considerably in pointing out which among the people were domestic servants I went from door to door. Neighbours proved very useful in correcting and verifying facts given by any one of them. In this way I gathered a first hand idea about their living conditions.

Once in a chawl occupied by the Gujarati-speaking Surti people at Tardeo, a false rumour spread that I belonged to the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and had come to collect information which I would later utilize for driving them out lock, stock and barrel from their homes in Bombay and give them a dog's death! Such is the distrust for, and fear of strangers lurking near their habitations among these people! I had an awful time explaining to them the nature and purpose of my work.

At another instance in a chawl at Dhobi Talao, a woman with tears in her eyes, thinking that the Government was going to make some regulations for improving the working conditions of the domestic servants, said that this enquiry was an answer to

her prayers as no one had as yet taken any notice of domestic workers and no legislation existed for them. This way of thinking I found common among many persons in this group and it was with great effort that I brought home to them the fact that I represented no such scheme and was just a student making investigation in their particular class. But all the while when I was talking to them, I found that they still harboured this pet illusion. Anyway, it did help me to induce them to talk, which many of them never would have done otherwise.

Gathering in the public parks and gardens for an hour or two in the evenings to meet their friends and chat is one of the chief modes of passing their leisure hours among a large number of the domestic servants. That was where I collected several of my schedules. But the difficulty was, that, at that time many of them felt disinclined to talk to a stranger like me, for that was the only time they had for meeting their own friends and relatives. Anyway, the response was quite good on the whole, though many a time I was faced with the necessity of dispersing any possible crowd forming around me, asking me impertinent questions which I was obliged to answer for fear of arousing any undue suspicion and antagonizing them.

During one afternoon, when I was interviewing a small group of women servants in a park, I was called by some of their employers in the adjoining building to give an explanation of what I was doing and why I was putting "radical" ideas in the minds of their servants, not understanding the real nature of my work. Great is the antipathy of some of the employers towards the servant class, and any possible attempt at ameliorating the conditions of the domestic servants is most revolting to them.

Ignorance and helplessness due to extreme poverty of this class result in great exploitation of their energies on the part of most of the employers. On the other hand, no sentiments of grudge or malice were traced generally in this class towards their employers. On the contrary they look upto them as their benefactors giving them employment, on whom they said their very existence depended or else they would have to die of starvation!

**Extreme poverty, insufficient means of agriculture and lack**

of employment in their native place compel these people at a young age to leave their families behind and come down to Bombay in search of jobs, as it happens in the case of all other sections of the labouring population. Not being able to find work in factories or elsewhere, they take up employment as domestic servants in private households very often as a last resort; a work which according to popular belief requires little training; but which is most distasteful to almost all of them.

The problem of finding accommodation as a result of acute housing shortage, as pointed out to me by some, is another factor partially responsible for driving these people to enter full-time resident domestic service where they generally get both board and lodging, thus tiding over temporarily their housing difficulties.

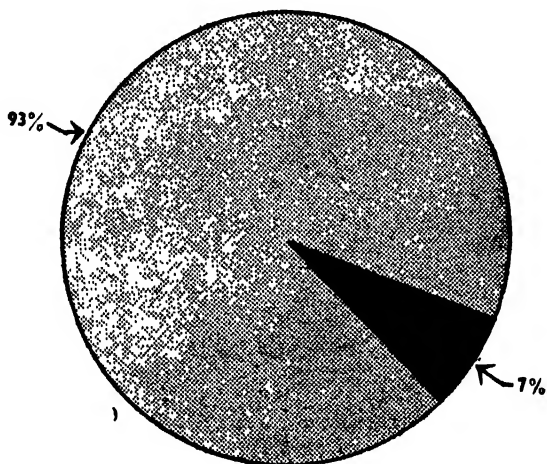
In times of unemployment they either put up temporarily with a friend or a relative in some servants' quarters, sleeping often on stair-case landings, where I met several of them, or go back to their native place only to return to the city for a new job under pressure of pecuniary necessity. Their work being of a rather temporary nature, as will be seen later, they are generally found moving from one locality to another. And the same person found working at Colaba at one time may be found working at Dadar or even Kalyan at another, as it was discovered in the case of one or two persons I met. This is another reason why collecting a sample representing all the localities was not possible nor necessary.

My enquiry among the domestic servants is confined only to individuals belonging to the Christian, the Gujarati and the Marathi communities. We have in our sample of 500 individuals, 80 Christian men and 70 Christian women, 80 Gujarati men and 75 Gujarati women, and 80 Marathi men and 115 Marathi women. It includes almost all the categories of domestic servants except private motor-drivers and cleaners whose work is more of an out-door type rather than of a domestic nature, although the census includes them among other domestic servants.

The Muslims, and other servants from Madras, Punjab, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Sindh etc., are omitted in this group.

The survey is restricted mainly to persons coming from dif-

**PROPORTION OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS TO THE TOTAL  
SELF SUPPORTING PERSONS IN ALL INDUSTRIES AND  
SERVICES IN GREATER BOMBAY IN 1951 CENSUS**



 PERSONS IN OTHER INDUSTRIES AND SERVICES  
 DOMESTIC SERVANTS



ferent regions of the Bombay State (with the exception of Christian servants from Goa and Mangalore outside the State) which supply a large bulk of the domestic labour force to the city of Bombay.

As seen in table 2a, the Christian domestic servants come chiefly from Goa, Mangalore, Ratnagiri district, Kolaba district, Kolhapur district and Damaon. The largest number of them, however, about 54.3 per cent of the total come from Goa and

TABLE 2a  
NATIVE PLACES OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS

Name of Native Place	<i>Christians</i>					
	Christian Men		Christian Women		All Christians	
	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage
Goa	49	61.4	32	46	81	54.3
Mangalore	16	20	27	38.5	43	28.6
Ratnagiri District	10	12.4	4	5.7	14	9.3
Kolaba District	5	6.2	5	7.1	10	6.6
Kolhapur District	—	—	1	1.4	1	.6
Damaon	—	—	1	1.4	1	.6
Total	80	100	70	100	150	100

the next largest group, about 28.6 per cent are from Mangalore. The remaining 17.1 per cent are from the other districts mentioned above.

A fairly good majority of the Gujarati domestic servants, about 64.6 per cent in all, come from the numerous small towns and villages of the Surat district as can be seen in table 2b.

21.3 per cent of the Gujaratis are from Saurashtra, and they are all women. They originally belong to the fishing communities of Saurashtra. The rest of the Gujarati servants, about 14.1 per cent come from such districts as Thana, Broach, Kaira and Baroda, of the Bombay State and from the Portuguese town of Damaon.

TABLE 2b  
NATIVE PLACES OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS

<i>Gujaratis</i>						
Name of Native Place	Gujarati Men		Gujarati Women		All Gujaratis	
	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage
Surat						
District	63	78.9	37	49.5	100	64.6
Thana						
District	9	11.3	—	—	9	5.8
Broach						
District	2	2.5	3	4	5	3.2
Kaira						
District	2	2.5	2	2.7	4	2.6
Baroda						
District	1	1.2	—	—	1	.6
Damaon	3	3.7	—	—	3	1.9
Saurashtra	—	—	33	44	33	21.3
Total	80	100	75	100	155	100

The table 2c for the Marathi domestic servants shows that on the whole a majority of them, about 29.2 per cent have the Ratnagiri district as their native place. But on further study of the table it becomes evident that this applies only to the Marathi men servants among whom as many as 66.1 per cent of the individuals are from Ratnagiri whereas, only 3.6 per cent of the

women servants are from the same district. The largest number of Marathi women, however, 39 per cent come from the Ahmednagar district and the next largest group, 29.6 per cent come from the Nasik district. The Kolaba district is another place from where a significant number of Marathi men servants come to Bombay; and we have about 25.3 per cent of them in our sample. The rest of the Marathi domestic servants, chiefly women, come from such districts as Satara, Poona, Sholapur and Khandesh.

TABLE 2c  
NATIVE PLACES OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS

*Marathis*

Name of Native Place	Marathi Men		Marathi Women		All Marathis	
	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage
Ratnagiri District	53	66.1	4	3.6	57	29.2
Ahmednagar District	—	—	45	39	45	23.1
Kolaba District	20	25.3	—	—	20	10.3
Satara District	4	5	12	10.4	16	8.2
Poona District	3	3.6	15	13.0	18	9.2
Nasik District	—	—	34	29.6	34	17.4
Sholapur District	—	—	4	3.6	4	2.1
Khandesh District	—	—	1	.8	1	.5
Total	80	100	115	100	195	100



For a better understanding of the composition of the servant population in our sample, it is essential to consider the caste distribution of the Hindu servants as shown in tables 3a and 3b for the Gujaratis and the Marathis respectively. We find that among the Gujaratis a large majority of the servants belong to the Mahyavansi Surti caste, for we have about 63.3 per cent of the total Gujarati men and women servants belonging to this caste. Another significant number of the individuals, about 21.4 per cent are Kharvas (the original fishing castes of Saurashtra). These are all women. Men of the Kharva caste do not serve as domestic servants in private households as do their women-folk. The rest of the Gujarati servants belong to such castes as the Dubla, the Rathod, the Chauhan, the Koli, the Dhorja, the Kharva Harijan, and the Vankar. With the exception of the Kharvas of Saurashtra all these castes, including the Mahyavansi, are those belonging to the backward classes of the Hindu society.

TABLE 3a  
CASTE DISTRIBUTION OF HINDU SERVANTS

Caste	Gujerati Men		Gujerati Women		All Gujaratis	
	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage
Mahyavansi	66	82.5	32	43.0	98	63.3
Dubla	3	3.8	5	6.6	8	5.1
Rathod	5	6.3	—	—	5	3.2
Chauhan	1	1.2	—	—	1	.6
Koli	2	2.5	1	1.4	3	1.9
Dhorja	1	1.2	—	—	1	.6
Kharva (Harijan)	—	—	2	2.6	2	1.3
Vankar	2	2.5	2	2.6	4	2.6
Kharva	—	—	33	44	33	21.4
Total	80	100	75	100	155	100

The table 3b for the caste distribution of the Marathi servants shows that there are sharp distinctions of castes between men and women. In other words, while men are restricted to some castes, women are restricted to certain other castes of the Marathi community. For instance men are chiefly confined to the Kunbi, the Kulwadi, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, the Shinde, the Mali, the Marathi, the Kumbhar, the Vankar and the Teli

TABLE 3b  
CASTE DISTRIBUTION OF HINDU SERVANTS

*Marathis*

Caste	Marathi Men		Marathi Women		All Marathis	
	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage	No. of Persons	Percentage
Kunbi	37	46.5	—	—	37	18.9
Kulwadi	28	35.0	—	—	28	14.4
Kshatriya	1	1.2	—	—	1	.5
Vaisya	2	2.5	—	—	2	1.0
Shinde	1	1.2	—	—	1	.5
Mali	1	1.2	—	—	1	.5
Marathi	1	1.2	3	2.6	4	2.0
Kumbhar	2	2.5	—	—	2	1.0
Vankar	1	1.2	—	—	1	.5
Teli	1	1.2	—	—	1	.5
Mahar	3	3.7	58	50.2	61	31.3
Chamar	1	1.2	32	28.0	33	16.9
Mang	1	1.2	8	7.0	9	4.6
Ghati	—	—	6	5.2	6	3.2
Somas	—	—	5	4.3	5	2.6
Vanjari	—	—	2	1.7	2	1.0
Dhor	—	—	1	.8	1	.5
Total	80	100	115	100	195	100

castes; whereas the women are chiefly confined to the Mahar, the Chamar, the Mang, the Ghati, the Somas, the Vanjari and the Dhor castes. These castes to which the women servants belong are the scheduled castes, whereas those of men servants are higher castes within the pale of Hindu society. We see that there are hardly 4 or 5 men belonging to the scheduled castes, while there are only 3 women belonging to one of the higher castes. More than three quarters of the Marathi men are Kunbis and Kulwadis as can be seen from the table, whereas an equal proportion of the Marathi women in our sample are Mahars and Chamars. We can conclude from this that while among upper castes domestic service as an occupation is pursued generally by men, among the lower depressed castes, this occupation is taken up generally by women only.

The study of an occupation necessitates also an enquiry into the age-composition of the individuals employed in it. Examining our tables 4a and 4b we find that for both men and women the range of age varies from 12 to 70 years. For men servants on the whole the majority of individuals, about 17.5 per cent, are in the age-group 16—20. But community-wise there are differences. It is only the Marathi servants who have the largest number of individuals in this age-group; and they are 37.5 per cent. The Gujarati men servants have a majority of persons, 22.4 per cent in the age-group 36-40, while the Christians have a majority of 17.5 per cent in the age-group 26-30. We notice that in the Marathi community the servants are mostly very young in age—between 12 and 25—and they are about 68.7 per cent of the total. After the age of 25, the numbers become considerably less in the subsequent age-groups. This is not so for the Gujarati men servants. Here we find the numbers increasing to a large extent after the age of 25, so that between the ages of 26 and 40 we find as many as half the number of individuals in this community. Even after 40, we do find a significant number of Gujarati servants. For the Christians also the age-composition is almost similar, though we find quite a few persons also below 25. 3.8 per cent of the total number of men servants are child servants for they are below 16 years in age.

The table 4b for women servants shows the highest concentration of individuals, about 20 per cent of the total in the age-

group 36-40. All the communities, except the Christians, have a majority of women in this age-group, with the Gujaratis having the largest number of them about 30.6 per cent. The majority of Christian women, about 20 per cent of them, are in the age-group 16-20. Although we find that among women of all the three communities there is a greater concentration of numbers in the middle age-group 30-40, there is quite a significant distribution of individuals on both the other sides of this age-group. The larger number of women in this middle age-group of 30-40 may be taken to mean that generally women enter domestic service later

TABLE 4a  
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS

*Men Domestics*

Average Age	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	35.9 Years		39.8 Years		25.4 Years		33.7 Years	
Age Group	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
12 — 15	1	1.2	—	—	8	10	9	3.8
16 — 20	5	6.2	7	8.8	30	37.5	42	17.5
21 — 25	13	16.2	3	3.8	17	21.2	33	13.8
26 — 30	14	17.5	12	15	7	8.8	33	13.8
31 — 35	12	15	10	12.5	7	8.8	29	11.9
36 — 40	10	12.5	18	22.4	3	3.7	31	12.9
41 — 45	6	7.6	7	8.8	1	1.2	14	5.8
46 — 50	9	11.2	5	6.2	2	2.5	16	6.6
51 — 55	3	3.7	9	11.2	4	5	16	6.6
56 — 60	6	7.6	6	7.5	1	1.2	13	5.4
61 — 65	1	1.2	3	3.8	—	—	4	1.7
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

TABLE 4b

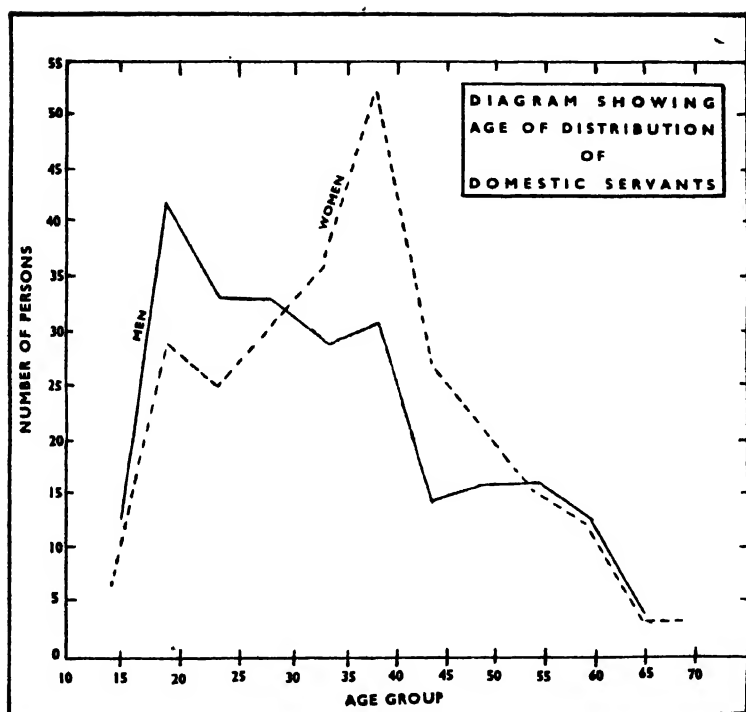
## AGE DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS

*Women Domestics*

Average Age	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	35.6 Years		38.4 Years		35.6 Years		36.4 Years	
Age Group	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
12 — 15	4	5.8	—	—	3	2.6	7	2.8
16 — 20	14	20	4	5.2	11	9.6	29	11.2
21 — 25	3	4.3	5	6.6	17	14.7	25	9.5
26 — 30	4	5.8	12	15.8	14	12.2	30	11.5
31 — 35	9	12.8	11	15.3	16	13.9	36	13.8
36 — 40	11	15.7	22	30.6	19	16.5	52	20
41 — 45	6	8.6	7	9.2	14	12.2	27	10.4
46 — 50	10	14.4	5	6.6	6	5.2	21	8.1
51 — 55	5	7.6	4	5.2	6	5.2	15	5.8
56 — 60	4	5.8	2	2.6	6	5.2	12	4.7
61 — 65	—	—	1	1.3	2	1.7	3	1.1
66 — 70	—	—	2	2.6	1	.8	3	1.1
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

in life when they are widowed or divorced, or when they find their husbands' income not sufficient for family needs, which will be seen in the succeeding chapter. 2.8 per cent of the women servants are child servants below the age of 16.

It would be of interest to examine the age distribution of the domestic servants in our sample from the graphic diagram on the following page. For both male and female workers we note that employment in domestic service begins at an age below 15.





But the workers in this age-group are quite few. After 15 the curves shoot up for both the sexes and reach the points of maximum numbers for males between the ages 15 and 20 and for females between 35 and 40. After reaching the maximum the two curves show some differences. For men servants, although the numbers begin to decrease in subsequent age-groups after 20, the decrease is gradual and punctuated with several fluctuations as is shown by the curve; whereas, for women servants after the point of maximum numbers, the curve takes a sheer drop and we see that the number of women in succeeding age-groups begins to decrease rapidly. Both the curves show that in the last age-group of 60-70 the numbers for male and female household workers are very few. As for the males there are no individuals after 65.

Having ascertained the caste and age distribution of the workers in our sample, we proceed to inspect how far the sample is representative of the city of Bombay by studying the local distribution of the servants. Table 5 gives the distribution of persons studied according to different localities where it was

TABLE 5

## LOCAL DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS

Name of the Locality	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total
Dadar	154	30.8
Matunga	62	12.4
Mahim	10	2
Colaba	137	27.4
Grant Road and Tardeo	34	6.8
Dhobi Talao	58	11.6
Warden Road and Breach Candy	45	9
Total	500	100



possible to approach and interview them. We note from the table that certain important localities are missing. But this was owing to the difficulties present in interviewing servants in those localities. For instance private bungalows in such areas as Napean Sea Road and Malabar Hill were avoided for fear of dogs and chowkidars. Also, places like Girgaum and Kalbadevi Road and Byculla were omitted as there are no servants' quarters or parks over there where I could meet the servants. Anyway, the sample covering such areas as Dhobi Talao, Grant Road, Tardeo, Dadar and Matunga is fairly representative also of conditions obtaining at Girgaum, Kalbadevi, Byculla, owing to a general similarity of the middle, and lower middle class households over there. And, as mentioned above, the constant mobility of the servants from one locality to another did not necessitate a collection of sample from each and every locality.

The local distribution of servants leads us to a consideration of their distribution with reference to different communal households where they were found working at the time of enquiry. This classification is shown in table 6. It can be seen that the

TABLE 6

## COMMUNAL HOUSEHOLDS WHERE SERVANTS ARE WORKING

Nature of Communal Households	No. of Communal Households
European Households	60
Marathi        "	70
Gujerati       "	40
Sindhi         "	30
Bengali        "	12
Parsee         "	256
Punjabi        "	20
Madras         "	6
Goanese        "	21
Muslim         "	8
Anglo Indian  "	8
Jewish          "	3
Others         "	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>538</b>

sample represents servants working in the households of practically every community found in the city of Bombay. The number of communal households, however, is greater than the number of schedules, owing to the fact that the non-resident part-time servants work at more than one place at a time and it would have been still greater had it not been for the vagueness with they disclosed this fact.

There is no special reason why the number of households is greater for one community than for the other. I filled the schedules as I got them at random owing to the difficulties inherent in this type of investigation. Convenience rather than strict procedure had to be the guiding principle in the method adopted.

One particular attitude traced in the servant class is that the servants usually resent the idea of working in a household belonging to upper class members of their own caste or community, as they consider it highly degrading to their self-respect. In some instances however, owing to their inability to find work elsewhere, they were found, compelled by circumstances, to do so.

Having surveyed the nature of our sample, and the age-composition and caste distribution of the individuals comprising it, we proceed, in the following chapter to study the marital conditions as they are found among the domestic servants.

## CHAPTER III

### MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY

#### *MARRIAGE*

INVESTIGATION INTO the marital conditions of the domestic servants provides a pattern of absorbing interest to the student of social classes. Here we are dealing with a class of employees, belonging to some of the lowest strata of society. Although the sample consists of a motley group of individuals from different communities, such as the Christian, the Gujarati and the Maharashtrian, having different religious and cultural affiliations, coming from the various districts of the Bombay State, factors, with minor variations, common to them all as belonging to the class of domestic workers, have come out with a certain amount of clarity.

The picture of marriage patterns emerging from our survey bears the stamp of distressing poverty, of family relationships often disturbed by drunkenness or ill-health, of little or lack of education, of hardship and separation, of uncertainty of employment and insecurity of working conditions, and of the stifling effects of a restrictive environment.

A survey of marriage in an enquiry-group, a priori necessitates a study of the marital status of the individuals composing the group. To determine the marital status of the individuals, we attempt to find out the number of those that are married, widowed, divorced or deserted at the time of enquiry.

Referring to table 7a which indicates the marital status of men domestics, we find that of all the three communities, the Gujaratis have the highest percentage, 88.8, of the married; next come the Christians with 52.5 per cent married, and then the Marathis who have only 50 per cent of the married individuals among them. The total number of married men in our sample

are 64 per cent. Only 6 men, or 2.5 per cent out of a total of 240, are widowers of whom 2 are Christians and 4 Gujeratis. The column for the divorced or separated shows that only one Christian domestic has broken relations with his wife. But this extremely low incidence of divorce and separation among the men is no true index of the marriage stability of these people. The table shows only the present marital status of the individuals concerned and any previous cases of divorce or separation are covered up by subsequent remarriages. For this purpose a later statement giving previous divorce cases will present a more authentic idea of marital stability among the domestic servants.

That marriage is not universal among the men domestic servants is borne out by the fact that a large percentage, as much as 33.1, are unmarried in this group. Of these, the Marathis show the largest number of the unmarried, they being 50 per cent; the Christians have 43.8 per cent unmarried, whereas, the Gujeratis are the only group with a very low percentage, 6.2, of the unmarried. The reasons for the large number of the unmarried will be discussed in a later part of this chapter.

TABLE 7a  
MARITAL STATUS OF

*Men Domestics*

Community	Married	Widowed	Divorced or separated	Unmarried	Total
<i>Christians</i>	42	2	1	35	80
Percentage	52.5	2.5	1.2	43.8	100
<i>Gujeratis</i>	71	4	0	5	80
Percentage	88.8	5.0	0	6.2	100
<i>Marathis</i>	40	0	0	40	80
Percentage	50.0	0	0	50.0	100
<i>All Communities</i>	153	6	1	80	240
Percentage	64.0	2.5	.4	33.1	100

The table 7b giving marital status of the women domestic workers shows certain variations from the previous one. Here the total percentage of the married women is only 47.5, of whom among the Christians there are 18.6, the Marathis 55.5, and the Gujeratis 61.2. The table shows that there is a significant number of widows among women servants of our sample. They are, on the whole, as many as 29.5 per cent, of whom 33 per cent are among the Christians, 29.5 per cent among the Gujeratis and 27.8 per cent among the Marathis.

The Marathi women have the largest number of the divorced or deserted individuals, they being 13.2 per cent; next, the Christians have 11.4 per cent, whereas, the Gujeratis have only 2.7 per cent, bringing the percentage to 9.6 for the whole group. As has been pointed out before, a truer index of marriage stability in the servant class will be ascertained at a later stage.

There are not as large a number of the unmarried among women as among men servants. For we see from the table that

TABLE 7b  
MARITAL STATUS OF

*Women Domestics*

Community	Married	Widowed	Divorced or separated	Unmarried	Total
<i>Christians</i>	13	23	8	26	70
Percentage	18.6	33.0	11.4	37.0	100
<i>Gujeratis</i>	46	22	2	5	75
Percentage	61.2	29.5	2.7	6.6	100
<i>Marathis</i>	64	32	15	4	115
Percentage	55.5	27.8	13.2	3.5	100
<i>All Communities</i>	123	77	25	35	260
Percentage	47.5	29.5	9.6	13.4	100

there are, on the whole, only 13.4 per cent unmarried women as against 33.1 per cent unmarried men. The Christian women have as many as 37 per cent of the unmarried, whereas, the Gujeratis and the Marathis have very low percentages of the unmarried, 6.6 and 3.5 respectively.

One fact that stands out clear from table 7b is that there is a preponderance of widows, divorcees, deserted, and unmarried over the married, among the women domestic servants, the former being 52.5 per cent compared with 47.5 per cent of the latter. Can we generalise from these results, that domestic service is an occupation not much favoured by married women who have husbands to support them, and that, usually women are driven to take up this occupation by sheer force of circumstance when they are widowed, divorced, deserted, or when they are unmarried?

The age at marriage is an important factor in the study of marriage in a given social class that needs to be considered. Stressing the importance of studying the age factor at marriage O. D. Duncan and others remark that, "Age at marriage serves as a point of departure in studying both the static and the dynamic aspects of population. Also, it is probably true that the predominant tendencies regarding age at marriage within a given population reflect to some extent the presence of cultural, geographic, and even other influences in the environment which are not of purely demographic origin".<sup>1</sup>

The domestic servants in our sample belong to two main religious groups, viz., the Hindu and the Christian. As will be seen from the table, the age at which their marriages took place, like everything else, is a reflection of their religious and cultural practices. Tables 8a and 8b giving average age at marriage of men domestics and their wives, and women domestics and their husbands show a marked divergence of the Christians from the Hindus. Christian ethics forbid the marriage of a boy below 20 and a girl below 14 which is seen in the two tables where the average age at marriage of Christian men servants is 26.6 years

1. Otis D. Duncan with John McClure, James Salisbury Jr. and Richard Simmons: 'The Factor of Age In Marriage', *American Journal of Sociology*, 39, 1934, p. 469.

and the husbands of Christian women servants is 27.8 years; and the average age of the wives of Christian men servants is 18.7 years and that of Christian women servants is 18.4 years. In marked contrast stand the Gujerati and the Marathi groups of the Hindu community. Here we find that in no instance the average age at marriage of men is above 19, and that of the women, above 14.

A further analysis of the data regarding age at marriage has revealed significant differences between the Christian and the Hindu servants. For instance, while among the Christian men servants, the majority of marriages, 62.5 per cent have occurred

TABLE 8a

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE OF MEN DOMESTICS  
AND THEIR WIVES

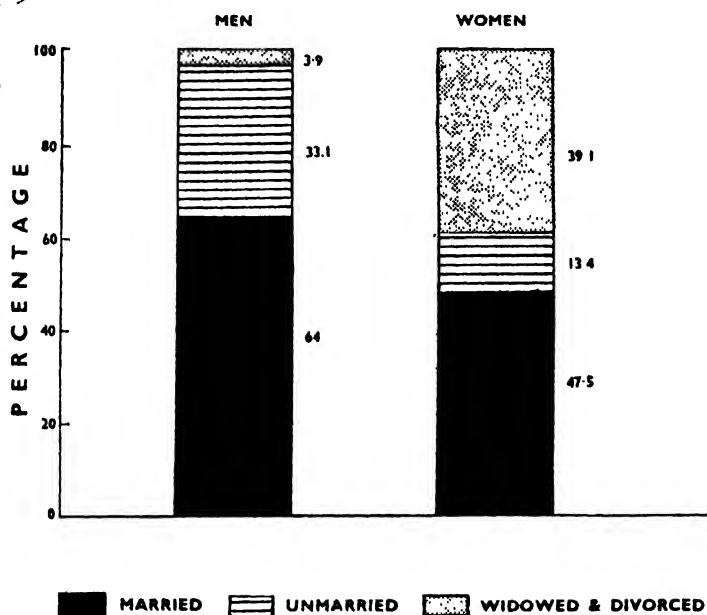
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Average of Total
Average age at first marriage	26.6 years	17.2 years	18.5 years	20.8 years
Average age of wives at first marriage	18.7 years	11.5 years	13.9 years	14.7 years

TABLE 8b

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE OF WOMEN  
DOMESTICS AND THEIR HUSBANDS

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Average of Total
Average age at first marriage	18.4 years	10.8 years	9.8 years	13.0 years
Average age of husbands at first marriage	27.8 years	15.7 years	17.4 years	20.3 years

## MARITAL STATUS OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS







between the ages of 23 and 28 years, among the Gujarati and the Marathi men servants, the largest number of marriages were performed at an age between 17 and 22. Again, while another significant number of Christian marriages, about 20 per cent, were performed at a higher age between 29 and 40, the next largest number of Gujarati and Marathi marriages, 28 and 32.5 per cent respectively, had taken place at a lower age between 11 and 16. It is also important to note that 14.7 per cent of the Gujarati men servants were married at a tender age between 5 and 10!

Among women servants also there have been recorded differences along communal lines. While the largest number of Christian women, 43.2 per cent, were married at an age between 17 and 22, the largest number of Gujarati and Marathi women, 43 and 47.8 per cent respectively, were married at a much lower age, between 5 and 10 years. Also, while 13.6 per cent of the marriages of Christian women had taken place at a later age, between 23 and 28, and one marriage even after 35, an almost equal number of Gujarati and Marathi marriages occurred at an age even below 5! Not a single marriage among the Gujaratis and Marathis has been recorded after the age of 22.

We infer from above, that pre-puberty and even infant marriages are a common occurrence among the Gujarati and the Marathi domestic servants. The individuals of this group belong to some of the lower castes of the Hindu community. Uptill the third decade of the twentieth century pre-puberty and infant marriages among the Hindus were the order of the day. They were a matter of social prestige and were held up as the social ideal of the community. As has been explained by Dr. K. M. Kapadia, "The religious sentiments which the pundits, the leaders of society were ever watchful to exploit for the continuance of this practice, not only made marriage after puberty inconceivable but helped the process generated by the social forces, of degenerating pre-puberty marriage into infant marriage. Religious, social, psychological attitudes and tendencies thus conspired to make infant marriage a rule and an obligation"<sup>2</sup>. Once the practice of child-marriage became a pattern among the upper castes, the lower

castes were not slow or less enthusiastic to imitate this tendency. It is no wonder then, that among the domestic servants, who belong to the lower castes of the Hindu society, a large proportion of the marriages performed were child-marriages. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 laid down that a male under eighteen years of age or a female under fourteen was considered a child, and marriages of boys below eighteen and girls below fourteen were made a punishable offence.<sup>3</sup> It would be significant to point out from our sample the number of persons who were at the time of enquiry below the age of 28 who performed marriages when they were children, in contravention of the Child Marriage Restraint Act which took effect from April 1930.

Out of 12 married Gujarati men below 28, only 1 person was married below 18, and out of 9 Gujarati women below 28, 3 were married below the age of 14. This means that about 19 per cent of those who were below 28 years at the time of enquiry, had performed marriages when they were children. As for the Marathis, out of 19 men below 28, 6 were married at an age below 18, and out of 30 women below 28, 23 were married below 14, which means that as many as 59 per cent of those below 28 were cases of child-marriages. These figures show that among the Marathi speaking domestic servants there is a much greater incidence of child-marriage, even after 1930, than among the Gujarati servants. It also shows that among the lower castes of the Hindu community there still persists the tendency to perform child-marriages in connivance of the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929.

It was, however, discovered on questioning the domestic servants that most of them were not favourably inclined towards the age-old custom, men being in a greater majority than the women, who were most emphatic about doing away with child-marriages. Some women, on the other hand, were more reluctant to give up the practice as such or to give a second thought to it, which according to them even looked nice in the eyes of the community. Among the reasons cited by some individuals for the persistence of child-marriage in their class are, (i) that when a girl is very young in age the parents receive Rs. 400 to 500 from her hus-

3. Ibid., p. 154.

band at the time of marriage, but when she grows old, i.e., when she is over 12 years of age, her parents do not receive a penny, and on the contrary, they have to pay a large bride-groom price; (ii) that girls and boys themselves express a desire to be married at a young age otherwise there is a danger of their going astray; this is so, because among poorer classes owing to a lack education and other recreational facilities, children are likely to indulge in immoral practices and the girls stand a chance of losing their character at an early age.

This short discussion of the prevalence of the custom of child-marriage among the Hindu domestic servants leads us to a consideration of the disparity in age between the husband and the wife among the individuals in our sample.

The difference in age between the spouses is an important item in the study of marriage patterns of an enquiry-group. In our society, the husband is generally a few years older than the wife according to the well-established pattern of differences between the ages of the spouses, and the domestic servants, under our investigation, show hardly any deviation from this pattern with only an exception here and there.

As in the case with age at marriage, sharp differences have been observed too in the average age disparity between the spouses along communal lines. For instance, the average difference in age between husband and wife is recorded highest among the Christians in our sample, it being 9.1 years and lowest among the Gujeratis, only 4.7 years. For the Marathi servants, it is 6.5 years. But in the latter group, differences are to be found between Marathi men and wives on the one hand, whose average age disparity is 4.6 years, and Marathi women and husbands on the other, whose average age disparity is higher, being 7.2 years. Also, while among the Christian servants there are quite a significant number of instances where the age difference between the spouses is over 15 years even as much as 30 to 35 years, and they are 11.4 per cent of the total, among the Gujeratis and the Marathis there are only 1.4 and 3.3 per cent of such cases respectively.

It is interesting to note here that there are 2 Christian and 1 Marathi women servants, who are about 1 to 3 years older than

their husbands. These are the only 3 instances in our whole sample which do not conform to the general pattern of the wife being younger than the husband.

The proportion of persons who have performed more than one marriage, to the total number of the married in each community, is another significant item in the study of marriage. Out of 160 married men servants, in our sample 79.4 per cent are married once only, 19.4 per cent are twice-married, the continuing marriage being their second, and 2 persons, i.e., 1.2 per cent have married 3 times. Of these, the Gujaratis have the largest number, 22.8 per cent of the individuals married twice. The Christians have 17.5 per cent, and the Marathis, 15.5 per cent of the married individuals in this category. The 2 persons who have married 3 times belong to the Gujarati group.

Compared to men, the women domestics have a larger percentage, 88, of those married once. But here is also one instance of a woman belonging to the Marathi group who has married 4 times. The Marathis have the greatest number, 14.5 per cent, married twice. The Gujaratis have 13, and the Christians have only 2.2 per cent of the women married twice.

Speaking of the number of marriages performed by domestic servants prompts us to investigate the reasons for subsequent marriages for that would give a good index of the incidence of widow remarriage as well as divorce and desertion in this class.

Among men 13.8 per cent of those married twice contracted a second marriage after the death of the first wife, 6.2 per cent after divorcing the first wife and 1.2 per cent committed bigamy. Among the Christians, all second marriages are after the death of the first wife for there are no cases of any divorce as Roman Catholic Christianity does not, under any circumstances, permit divorce. The Gujaratis have 8 per cent of the second marriages due to divorce with the first wife, while the Marathis have a close 7.5 per cent of such cases. The 2 instances of bigamous marriages are among the Marathis only.

Only 6.2 per cent of the married women are cases of widow remarriage. The incidence is greatest among the Marathi women where 10.8 per cent of the widows married again. The Gujaratis have 4.3 per cent and the Christians only 2.3 per cent

of such instances. Considering the fact that there are 77 widows out of 225 married women, i.e., 34.5 per cent, the incidence of widow remarriage is very low in comparison. This may be explained by the fact that although widow remarriage is socially permitted among these people, it is generally looked down upon, for in this class of both the Gujarati and the Marathi communities, the widow is not allowed to marry a bachelor. She must select a widower or a divorced man. Again, a widow is not allowed to perform a second marriage with proper religious rites. Among the Marathis the widow has to perform a Ghandharva marriage or a "Gath Lagna" as they call it, whereby a knot is tied with the garments of the marrying couple and 'Kumkum' (vermillion) is applied to their hands and feet. The 'mantra' that is recited is called "Ulta Mantra" and the whole ceremony takes place at night outside a temple but never within its precincts. It is performed in the presence of five persons who are afterwards feasted.

Among the Gujaratis, widow remarriage, or the marriage of a divorced woman goes by the name of "Natru", a term of low connotation for this kind of marriage. A woman who has performed "Natru" is not favourably looked upon by the members of the community. The above considerations may be taken to explain the low incidence of widow remarriage in our group of people. Among the Christians, however, no stigma attaches to a widow marrying again, but the fact that there is only one instance of a widow marrying a second time in comparison with 23 Christian widows, shows that marriage after the death of the husband is not generally preferred by the women themselves.

It has been recorded that 4.9 per cent of the women were married a second time after divorcing their first husbands. There are 8.6 per cent of divorced women remarrying among the Gujaratis, and 4.5 per cent among the Marathis. In most cases attempts were made to conceal the fact of a previous divorce owing to disgrace attached to it, and information was obtained in a round about manner from the neighbours. Very often the first husband was spoken of as dead when he was actually alive, but living separately from the woman.

Divorce and desertion, as has been shown by a number of studies on the subject, are a phenomenon of frequent occurrence

among the holders of low-ranking occupations. The domestic servants, as will be seen in later chapters, belong to the very low-income groups of society. As marriages in our society do not occur randomly but between people usually belonging to the same social class, people who are thrown together at work or who are brought together by their positions in the social structure, an enquiry into the various occupations followed by the wives and husbands of the individuals in our sample suffices to show that domestic service is an occupation that calls forth persons who belong to that class of people generally termed "the working class."

The wives of men domestics are chiefly occupied in agricultural activities in their native place. They either do cultivation on a very small scale on their own patch of land or are usually hired as farm labourers on the lands of the rich. Some of their wives, 6.5 per cent, are domestic servants in the city of Bombay. As for the husbands of women servants, they are all workers belonging to low-ranking occupations, such as mill and factory workers (i.e., industrial labourers) who form the greatest numbers among them, being 31 per cent, agricultural labourers, domestic servants, office peons, tailors, liftmen, porters, masons, carpenters, hotel boys, laundrymen, shop-assistants, labourers in docks, municipality, port-trust etc. It is to be noted that none of them occupies the position of any of the higher professions. These are the low income groups of people belonging to the working classes, whose wives are occupied as domestic servants in private households. Therefore, whatever factors of marital instability and family disorganization are true for the working classes in general will be found to be true also for the domestic servant class, for, the families of the domestic servants are none other than working class families.

One factor chiefly contributing towards family disorganization in the servant class, as it is in all other working classes, is the long absence of the father or the mother from home which tears at the basic fabric of the family separating husband and wife, parents and children. Eliot Slater and Moya Woodside writing on the point have very well explained that, "If a husband is absent too long, his wife's memory of him inevitably grows dim; in any real sense the marriage is not a marriage at all, but a sus-

pension of that state".<sup>4</sup> It will be seen in a later chapter that many of our men domestic servants are resident servants, i.e., they reside with the family of their employer and are thrown with other domestic servants, whereas, their own families dwell either in their villages or in some other parts of the city. Long continued absence from home and relatives and village community, indicates a lack of communal control and influences adversely the morals of these people, which must be considered among the chief causes of marital instability in this class.

The Economic factor is another one shaking the structure of marital relationships among the domestic servants. The domestic servants belong to a class of workers whose incomes are far below the level of adequacy. This must impose a severe strain upon the conjugal relations of the husband and the wife. William J. Goode writing on 'Economic Factors and Marital Stability' has well brought out the fact that, "As discord from whatever source becomes systematic and chronic, withdrawal of economic support becomes a major expression of waning loyalty. . . . At lower class levels this withdrawal of economic support is laden with less guilt than might be supposed, because one of the components of the attitudinal complex of the lower class divorced father toward his children is a tendency to think of them as belonging more to the mother than to himself. They are primarily her task and responsibility, and her waning loyalty relieves him of at least some of his guilt concerning children. If she no longer 'deserves' his support, then neither do they".<sup>5</sup>

From the above statement it is clear that there is a comparatively lesser emotional stake in the family at least on the part of the working class father. It is a well-known fact that extra-marital sex experience for the husband is not tabooed in the lower and working class culture to the same extent as in the middle class. "Not only may these acts and attitudes be in themselves causes of family instability", says E. V. Schneider, commenting on this fact, "but they may also indicate a readiness on the part

4. Eliot Slater and Moya Woodside: *Patterns of Marriage — A Study of Marriage Relationships in the Urban Working Classes*, London 1951, p. 222.

5. William J. Goode : 'Economic Factors and Marital Stability'. *American Sociological Review*, 16, 1951, p. 802.



of the man for the dissolution of marriage".<sup>6</sup> While discussing in detail the factors operating towards an easy break up of working class families, Schneider further mentions that, "The tendency of some working class fathers to define their family roles in authoritarian terms may lead to family crises. This is all the more true because the husband's authoritarian attitude is backed up neither by his financial power, nor by his high occupational status, nor by the general culture. Thus there is little reason for the wife or for the children to accept the tyranny or brutality of the husband and father".<sup>7</sup>

From the above discussion we may infer that among the working classes to which our domestic servants belong, a weak social and economic ground, an absence of property ties, an inadequate income, little emotional attachment, a low social status are among factors constantly working towards loosening of conjugal bonds of husband and wife, especially if there are major temperamental and personality incompatibilities between them.

Having understood the general psycho-social back-ground of marital instability among the working classes of our society we attempt to explore the situation as it stands among our domestic servants.

Divorce among the lower castes of the Marathi speaking community is free and easy, and therefore quite common. It is in the hands of the man as well as the woman. Some of the common grounds on which divorce is granted are cruelty of the husband, general unhappiness for both the partners owing to living together, infidelity on the part of either party, mutual consent, incapacity of the husband to provide for the wife and children, and barrenness of the wife. Here are some grounds for divorce which we do not find in the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. This is what makes us call divorce among the lower castes free and easy. It is a peculiar feature of the lower castes that they are ignorant of the legal complexities involved in obtaining divorce and therefore there is no resort to a divorce court. The communal "Panch" over and above any court of law has to be consulted in case of divorce or a second marriage after divorce. Only when the "Panch"

6. E. V. Schneider: *Industrial Sociology*. New York, 1957, p. 456.

7. Ibid.

permits, can divorce be obtained. Very often the divorce is easily granted. Among the Gujerati lower castes the man desiring divorce has to return to the wife all her property and give her a certain sum of money which is usually Rs. 100. The woman desiring divorce has to pay even more to the injured party. Among the Marathi lower castes there are hardly such technicalities and a woman is free to leave her husband for any small pretext and to go and live with the man of her choice. Very often second marriages are contracted without undergoing any formalities of a divorce, or ceremony of a marriage which could hardly be called a marriage at all. Although the frequency of such unions is rather great among these people, the couple is generally looked down upon. Even when the community grants divorce frequently and easily, a woman who has discarded her husband holds little respect in the eyes of her neighbours, for the general attitude of the members of the community is not much in favour of divorce.

In the Catholic Christian community, where marriage is considered a sacrament, divorce is not allowed on any grounds. No matter what either of the partners is guilty of, even if one of them lives openly with another partner, the relation of the two remains sacred; and although in certain circumstances a separation may be granted, the right to remarry can never be granted. That is the reason why we do not come across a single case of divorce among the domestic servants belonging to the Catholic community. All the same, as we shall see from the tables, there are several instances of desertion and open living with another partner.

Desertion is more common than divorce even in the Gujerati and the Marathi communities. Writing about desertion among the lower classes of the Western countries Joanna C. Colcord says, "Family desertion is largely a phenomenon found among the low income groups, not necessarily because desertion as such is mainly due to economic pressure, but more probably because men in this group choose the informal freedom of desertion rather than the more conclusive and expensive methods of formal separation or divorce when family discord has reached the breaking point".<sup>8</sup> Rightly has desertion been called the 'Poor man's divorce'.

8. Joanna C. Colcord: 'Family Desertion and Non Support'. *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. VI, p. 78.

Another interesting feature among the domestic servants and their marital relations is elopement. Marriage at a very early age, where the match is arranged entirely by the parents or the guardians of the parties concerned without the slightest measure of freedom of choice of the spouse, often causes emotional discontent and unhappiness. It but follows that in later life when one becomes infatuated with another partner, there is a tendency to break all ties with the married spouse and elope with the new object of infatuation.

At this point we refer to our tables to study the incidence of divorce and desertion, and their causes among the domestic servants in our survey. Table 9a shows the number of men who have experienced divorce or desertion in their first or subsequent marriages. We note that out of 11 persons, i.e., 6.9 per cent of the married who have experienced divorce or desertion, 8 persons, or 5 per cent discarded their wives and only 3 persons or 1.9 per cent were discarded by their wives. The Gujaratis show a greater number of persons breaking marital ties than the Marathis. Only 1 Christian was deserted by his wife. This was because of periodic unemployment.

TABLE 9a  
DIVORCE AND DESERTION AMONG

	<i>Men Domestics</i>				
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Total	Percentage to the total married
No. of persons who divorced or deserted 1st or 2nd wife	0	6	2	8	5
No. of persons divorced or deserted by 1st or 2nd wife	1	1	1	3	1.9
Total	1	7	3	11	6.9

As it is seen in table 9b, 36 out of 225 married women, i.e., 16 per cent, have experienced divorce or desertion; of these 10, i.e., 4.5 per cent of the married had themselves discarded their husbands, whereas 26, i.e., 11.5 per cent were discarded by their husbands. It is only among the Gujarati women domestics that we find a greater number of wives divorcing their husbands rather than the husbands divorcing or deserting their wives as we find among the Christians and the Marathis. Among the Christians, 7 women, or 15.8 per cent of the married had been deserted by their husbands, whereas, only 1 had herself left her husband.

In one case among the Gujaratis, divorce was by mutual consent. It is interesting to note that one Marathi woman whose case we shall discuss later, had discarded three husbands and is living with a fourth one; whereas, another Marathi woman has been deserted by two previous husbands and is living in a state of misery alone.

One thing that strikes us when comparing the two tables, is that in both we find that on the whole men have a greater tendency to divorce or desert their wives than women; and also, a

TABLE 9b  
DIVORCE AND DESERTION AMONG

	<i>Women Domestics</i>				
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Total	Percentage to the total married
No. of persons who divorced or deserted 1st or 2nd husband	1	6	3	10	4.5
No. of persons divorced or deserted by 1st or 2nd husband	7	2	17	26	11.5
Total	8	8	20	36	16

larger number of the women servants have experienced divorce or desertion during their life-time than the men.

The reasons for this phenomenon are naturally of prime significance. From the information available on the topic it has been found that the reasons given by men servants for the break up of marriage include, barrenness of first wife, inability to get along together, wife eloping with another man, and inability to maintain wife because of unemployment. Of these, the largest number, 4 out of 11, i.e., 36.5 per cent had divorced their wives because of no children. Of the reasons for the break up of first or second marriage given by women are, husband eloping with another woman, inability of the husband to maintain wife, inability to get along together, husband's indulgence in drink and wife-beating, husband committing bigamy, wife having no children, wife's dislike for husband, and quarrels with in-laws. Two women could not give any specific reason for divorce. Out of 36 women, the majority, 36.5 per cent, have given the reason of husband eloping with another woman. This shows that infidelity on the part of the man, is the prominent reason for the break up of marriages among these people. Husband's inability to maintain wife and children is the next important reason given by 13.9 per cent of the women seeking divorce. This brings out the fact that laziness and dependence on the earnings of the wife are a weakness not often tolerated by the working class women.

It would be of interest here to refer to two or three striking cases from our field of survey to give a more complete picture of the incidence of divorce and desertion among the domestic servants. For instance we give first the example of the Marathi woman married four times, who was mentioned above. It was a neighbour of hers who gave the information that this woman had married four times. She herself, however, did not disclose the fact. She was first married to a man of her own caste when young. After staying with him for some years, she eloped with a Christian. When the latter was not able to support her, she again went away with another fellow who was a non-descript character, the caste and community of whom being not made clear and whom she deserted very soon. At present she is staying with her fourth "husband" because the third one was also unable to maintain her.

Another Marathi woman was rather a difficult case to handle. She refused to say anything about her husband who, according to her, died long ago and whom she declared to have been insane. But from information given by her neighbours, the husband of this woman is still alive and is a good man. It is she who is a shrew, for she had beaten him in public and sent him away to the village.

A sorrowful tale was told by a Mahar woman whose husband used to drink, beat and ill-treat her. Ultimately he eloped with a woman who was herself married. But the two could not live together for long and separated. The unfaithful husband came back to her but our interviewee would not have him back. At present she is staying with her parents and has a daughter whom she has to support out of her meagre earnings as a domestic servant.

Another Marathi woman who reported having never heard of her husband for nine years is really speaking deserted by him because she is childless. He has gone away with another woman, and therefore she is forced to work as a domestic servant, an occupation she did not follow previously.

On the other hand, there is a Christian woman who is employed as a full-time domestic, and who has three children by a man who is not her legal husband but with whom she is staying as wife. The man however, has a wife still living with whom he has broken all ties. This fact was reported to the investigator by the woman's own neighbours.

Lastly, mention must be made of a Gujarati woman who talked rudely in the beginning. It was discovered later that she had discarded her husband long ago whom she found to be too old for her and for whom she had no liking whatever. Fearing that her guilt would be known, she had at first refused to acknowledge that she was working as a domestic servant. Ultimately she did submit herself to be interviewed.

From some of these above cases we infer that more often than not the fact of a previous divorce or desertion was generally concealed by the interviewee till it was afterwards discovered by cross-questioning and by information given by the people round about. It is possible that at the time of taking a second husband, except in a case of elopement, previous entanglements might have been concealed from the new man.

That 4 Marathi women, i.e., 11.2 per cent of the divorced have given bigamy of their husbands as a reason for terminating their marriage testifies to the fact that bigamy still persists among the lower castes of the Hindu society. It was not always that the superseded wife sought a divorce under pressure of emotional and psychological tension, but very often cases were reported of two wives living in the same household, or of an injured wife quietly bearing the humiliation brought upon her while the husband was away in the native place contracting a second marriage. Very often the fact was indirectly revealed that the interviewee herself was the second wife of a man, superseding the first one. There is one exceptional case in our sample, of a woman herself asking her husband to bring a new wife for she had no children of her own. To-day both the women are living in perfect harmony with their family, both working as domestic servants, even after the death of their common husband. But such cases are of course very rare. In one instance the husband of an interviewee had a first wife who had deserted him and gone away with another man. Then the man married this person. But after some time the first unfaithful wife came back and the second wife found it difficult to live in the same house, so she had to quit. The husband who is at present living with the first wife does not provide for the second one.

One woman when questioned about details of marriage, refused to disclose any information about her husband. But an old woman from the neighbourhood blurted out on her face that her husband had left her and was living with two other wives in the native place! Two or three other similar cases too have been reported. In some instances it is not the interviewee who is the party to a bigamous marriage but some member or the other of the household has committed bigamy, or is the first or second wife of a bigamous husband.

Among the Marathi men domestic servants we have two cases of bigamous marriages. In the first instance in a Mali (gardener) who is living with one wife in Bombay. The first wife of this man is in the native place. The second one he has married because there is no one to cook his meals and keep house for him in the city. A fine pretext for bigamy! Whether the wife in the

village is cognisant of her husband's second marriage or not, no one knows.

Another Marathi man domestic has two wives, both in the native place. The second one he married with the consent of the first, because the first wife has no children. However, he is on good terms with both the women. Similar cases of bigamous marriages performed by some of the relatives of the Marathi men domestic servants indicate that bigamy is not an unknown feature of marriage among the families of the domestic servants from Ratnagiri and Kolaba.

Although no case of a bigamous marriage has been detected among the Gujarati servants, it is definitely reported by some of the well-informed persons among them that bigamy like divorce is prevalent, though in a restricted sense, in their community, the most common ground for it being the childlessness of the first wife.

As the Gujarati and the Marathi speaking domestic servants in our sample among whom the practice of bigamy still persists, belong to the lower strata of the Hindu community, all legislation carried out by the State and the Central governments against polygynous marriages among the Hindus, is applicable to them also. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 which extends all over India, laid down as one of the conditions of a sacramental marriage that neither party has a spouse living at the time of the marriage. Any marriage performed in contravention of this condition shall be void. The Act further provides that any person who, during the lifetime of his or her spouse, if the marriage of such person with such spouse has not been dissolved by a court of competent jurisdiction, contracts another marriage after the commencement of the Act shall be subject to the penalties provided in the Indian Penal Code for the offence of bigamy.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of the above legislation we find in our sample instances of bigamous marriages which should not be ignored. The prevalence of the practice only shows that though legislation can check its distribution, it has not only been unable to prevent its common prevalence, but also it is doubtful whether it has

9. Cf. Kapadia *op. cit.* p. 115.



been able to even affect it in the lower classes. "So long as these sentiments persist," writes Dr. K. M. Kapadia, "and so long as the religious belief and the social system of caste provide sanction for it, the ideal of monogamy cannot be completely realized".<sup>10</sup> Especially in the lower castes, more than in any of the upper castes, an ignorance and even connivance of the law and a general lack of consideration for the emotional and psychological needs of the woman, are factors which make it difficult to affect the currency of bigamy to a significant extent among these people.

Marriage is perhaps the only great occasion of importance and rejoicing in an otherwise dull, drab existence of the poor. However acute may be the poverty, a relatively considerable amount of money, which is almost always borrowed from money-lenders or friends, is expended on the grand event. Hence no discussion of marriage in any particular class would be complete without atleast a cursory mention as to the capacity of the people to spend money on the occasion of marriage.

On the whole the expenditure incurred on their marriages by the individuals interviewed has been calculated to range from Rs. 100 to Rs. 1,000, with a majority of persons having spent between Rs. 300 and Rs. 800. The number of instances where the marriage expenditure exceeded Rs. 1,000 are very few, belonging chiefly to the Christian community, which may be taken as exceptional cases. It has been observed that among the Christians the women have to spend slightly more than the men which may be owing to the prevailing custom of giving proportionately large dowries, whereas, on the other hand, among the lower castes of the Marathis and the Gujeratis, it is the men who have to spend more on marriage in view of the bride price they have to give for the women they marry. It is peculiar that 9.8 per cent of the women servants in our sample being too poor, did not themselves have to spend any money for it was their husbands, who, happening to be comparatively better-off, had borne all the expenses of marriage according to custom.

Not all the individuals in our sample are married men and women. A significant number of them, 33.1 per cent among the

10. Ibid., p. 113.

men and 13.4 per cent among the women domestics being unmarried, it would not be appropriate to by-pass these persons. An enquiry about their present ages for a comparison with the age at marriage of the married, and about their reasons for remaining unmarried is essential to complete the foregoing account.

Table 10a gives the average age and the distribution according to different age groups of the unmarried men domestic servants. A comparison with table 8a shows that the average present age of the unmarried is 21.6 years, whereas, the average age at marriage of the married men is 20.8 years. There being not much difference between the two we may say that on the whole the

TABLE 10a

DISTRIBUTION OF THE UNMARRIED ACCORDING TO  
DIFFERENT AGE-GROUPS

*Men Domestics*

Age Group	Chris:tians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Commu- nities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Below 18	4	11.4	—	—	16	40.	20	25
18 — 22	5	14.2	4	80	21	52.5	30	37.6
23 — 28	18	51.5	1	20	3	7.5	22	27.5
29 — 34	5	14.2	—	—	—	—	5	6.2
35 — 40	2	5.7	—	—	—	—	2	2.5
Over 40	1	2.8	—	—	—	—	1	1.2
Total	35	100	5	100	40	100	80	100
Average Age	25.6		20.4		18.3		21.6	
	years		years		years		years	

unmarried individuals have reached that age when they should have been married but are not yet married. But their average age does not indicate that there is no probability of their marrying in the near future. Taking the different communities we find the same situation. There is not a very great difference in the average ages at marriage of the married, and the present average age of the unmarried individuals. In fact the average age of the unmarried Christians is even below the average age at marriage of the married ones.

A more detailed study of the table shows that 25 per cent of the unmarried men are in the age-group below 18 which is the legal age at marriage. Therefore our concern remains only for the other 75 per cent. Of these, 3 men, all of whom are Christians are over 35 years old. It is for these persons that the chances of marriage are very rare. The largest number of the unmarried in all the communities, i.e., 65 per cent on the whole, are between 18 and 28. In fact among the Gujeratis and the Marathis there are no unmarried persons after 28. Incidentally, a majority of our married men, about 64.7 per cent were married at an age between 17 and 28. This means that our unmarried men between 18 and 28 have every probability of getting married in the near future. Only 5 unmarried persons are between 29 and 34 and they are all Christians. But even for these individuals the chances for marriage are not obliterated, for 13.3 per cent of the married Christians were married at an age between 29 and 34. Therefore, from the above we conclude that the state of being unmarried among our men servants is not a significant consideration as far as their ages go, for only 3 persons are above 35 and who knows even they may get a chance to marry since they belong to the Christian community where marriages are relatively late and where 4 persons were married at an age between 35 and 45.

As for the unmarried women domestics, as seen in table 10b there is a significant difference in the average age of the unmarried, which is 20.2 years, and the average age at marriage of the married women, which is 13 years if we compare with table 8b. Only a further study of the table with respect to the different communities can make things more clear. Among the Christian women, the average age at marriage is 18.4 and the average age of the unmarried is 21.5 years. There is thus only a difference of

TABLE 10b

DISTRIBUTION OF THE UNMARRIED ACCORDING  
TO DIFFERENT AGE-GROUPS

*Women Domestics*

Age Group	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Commu- nities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Below 14	2	7.7	—	—	2	50	4	11.4
14 — 17	7	27	1	20	2	50	10	28.6
18 — 22	10	38.5	4	80	—	—	14	40
23 — 28	2	7.7	—	—	—	—	2	5.7
29 — 34	1	3.8	—	—	—	—	1	2.8
35 — 40	3	11.5	—	—	—	—	3	8.6
Over 40	1	3.8	—	—	—	—	1	2.8
Total	26	100	5	100	4	100	35	100
Average Age	21.5 years		18.4 years		14.2 years		20.2 years	

3.1 years. For the Gujeratis and the Marathis, on the other hand, a wider gap is found between the average age of the unmarried women which is 18.4 and 14.2 years respectively, and the average age at marriage of the married which is 10.8 and 9.8 years respectively. Here we see that the average marriage age in both the communities is below the legal age for a girl to get married, which is kept at 14 by the Child Marriage Restraint Act. Since child marriages are fast dying out in the Hindu community the present average age of the unmarried Gujerati and Marathi women is not a matter of any concern. It is rather a tendency to be happy about!

Four unmarried women in our group, i.e., 11.4 per cent of the total unmarried are below 14. A large majority of 24 out of 35 i.e., 68.6 per cent are between 14 and 22. Since the age between 14 and 22 is not quite a big one for a woman to remain unmarried in view of the present changing social conditions and outlook of the people, these 24 unmarried women in the age-group 14 to 22 are surely not likely to remain unmarried all their lives. We find that among the Gujeratis there is no unmarried woman after the age of 22 and among the Marathis, after 17. It is only among the Christians that there are 7 women unmarried after 22. Of these, 4 are above 35 and 1 above 28 which is rather a late age for good chances of marriage. The 2 unmarried women between 23 and 28, of course, have not lost all chances of marriage in view of the fact that 13.6 per cent of the Christian women were married in that age-group.

An enquiry into the reasons for remaining unmarried reveals more significant features. Among those reasons cited by men, immaturity and financial difficulty deterring them from getting married, are given by an equal number, 46.5 per cent each. Among the Christians the majority 21 out of 35, or 60.3 per cent, have given lack of finances as the chief reason for remaining unmarried, whereas, among the Marathis, the majority 25 out of 40, or 62.5 per cent have given immaturity as a reason for remaining unmarried. Two persons have given the reason death of parents, of whom 1 is a Christian and 1 Marathi. It is a custom among the agricultural castes of the Marathis, that a man is not allowed to marry till 3 to 4 years after the death of his father. That is why 1 Marathi servant is unmarried at the age of 24. One Christian, unmarried at 46, has said that he never had any desire for marriage and another one has given an amusing reply that he does not wish to marry because he has no faith in women. Two persons, one a Gujerati and another a Christian said that they were going to be married soon, at the time of enquiry.

Of the 35 unmarried women servants in our sample, 16, or 46 per cent, are unmarried because they consider themselves too young. It is encouraging to note here, that of these 16 women, 3 are Gujerati girls who are 17 and 18 years of age, and who have said that at the present day they are considered young by

the community for marriage. This indicates a recent trend towards a rising age at marriage for girls among these people.

The next important reason given by women for being unmarried is lack of finances for marriage, 37.5 per cent of the unmarried women giving that reason, a majority of them being Christian. One 30-year-old Christian woman has said that she never had a desire to marry and another 50-year-old one has said that she was deterred from plunging into marriage by the bitter experiences of the women around her. Three women, one from each community, have stated that they are still unmarried because they have not yet received good prospects for marriage and one Christian woman has been engaged to be married soon.

That 46.5 per cent of the unmarried men, and 37.5 per cent of the unmarried women have given inability to afford marriage as a reason for their remaining unmarried, unravels a situation hitherto neglected in the domestic servant class. Marriage is essential for the full and satisfactory living of an individual. In spite of its many short-comings, there are sound reasons for marriage remaining a popular institution and a conscious goal for most. Within its frame many basic human needs can be met, the four most important recognised being "the desire for new experience, security, response and recognition".<sup>11</sup> When the fulfilment of marriage is denied for some reason or the other, it leads to dissatisfaction and frustration. It is a tragic state of affairs that 10 per cent of our domestic servants interviewed have had to remain unmarried, some even till the age of 35 and 40 because they cannot afford either the expenses of marriage or to maintain a wife and children. This is a reflection on the nature of domestic service as an occupation. As will be seen in later discussions, domestic service is one of the lowest paid of occupations and affords little or no scope for financial security or promotion. In the face of such a situation it is but natural that young men and women with meagre prospects in life, having aged parents and younger brothers and sisters to support, should dread to embark upon marriage, which for them would bring additional strain on their already flimsy resources.

The facts show, therefore, that it is not the present ages of

11. Baber Ray E. : *Marriage And The Family*, New York, 1953. p. 162.

a great majority of the unmarried individuals that is a matter of concern for us, but it is rather their economic condition that curbs their desires and hampers them in realizing the ideal of a satisfying, happy, married life that deserves due attention.

The above study of marriage in the domestic servant class lays bare certain very relevant and interesting features. The findings reveal that among the lower classes to which our domestic servants belong, there still persist marriage traits and practices, though in diminishing proportions, like child-marriage and bigamy which are legally prohibited by various Acts of legislation; that marriage among these people shows rather unstable inclinations, brought out by the cases of divorce and desertion, having a bearing on their social and cultural conditions; and that there is a likelihood for a significant number of individuals going without the satisfactions of marriage on account of economic burden brought to bear upon them by the very nature of the tendencies inherent in domestic service as a mode of earning a livelihood.

### **FERTILITY**

Since the fertility of women "has always been a matter of vital concern not only to the women themselves but also to the communities to which they belonged",<sup>12</sup> it would be significant to give some attention to the question before closing this chapter from the data collected about the first wives of 160 married men domestics and 225 married women domestics in our sample. The basic material for our method is information regarding the average number of children born to each married woman in relation with the age at marriage and duration of marriage.

From the information available, it has been calculated that the average fertility of the wives of all the men domestics is 2.5. The fertility is highest for the wives of Christian servants, being 3.02, and lowest for those of Marathi servants, being 1.5. The fertility of Gujarati wives is 2.7 children per woman.

As for the women servants of our example, their average fertility is 4.3, with the Gujarati women having the highest average of 5.4 and the Christian women, the lowest average fertility of

12. W. S. Thompson: *Population Problems*, New York, 1953, p. 146.

only 2.6. The Marathi women are between the two with an average fertility of 4.4.

The above data lay bare certain relevant facts. We observe that on the whole the women domestic servants show a higher average fertility than the wives of men servants. This is true for all the communities taken separately except the Christians. The higher fertility of the Gujarati and the Marathi women employees compared to that of the wives of men employees may be explained by the fact that, whereas the Gujarati and the Marathi women live with their husbands and families in the city, the wives of the Gujarati and the Marathi men generally live away from their husbands in the native place, with the husbands working in Bombay. Conditions of domestic service are a hindrance to fertility necessitating prolonged separation between husband and wife owing to exigencies of occupation.

From an attempt made to study the influence of the factor of age of the woman at marriage on fertility, the importance of which has been emphasised by most of the writers on fertility,<sup>13</sup> we have found in our group under survey that, in conformation with the view that early marriages are more fruitful than late ones, the average fertility is definitely higher for those women married at an age below 19 than for those married in later age periods. In our findings the fertility of women married after 25 is significantly the lowest.

It must be noted that the age of the husband also may be a factor influencing fertility. But the data in our sample being somewhat limited so as to admit of an analysis it has been ignored here for our purposes.

On the other hand, information being available for the duration of marriage this factor has been studied as determining the total fertility of the women. The age at marriage being constant, it is expected that a longer duration definitely shows a higher fertility than a shorter one. Since the child-bearing age of a

13. (i) c.f. Edgar Sydenstricker and Frank W. Notestein: *Differential Fertility According To Social Classes*, *Journal of American Statistical Association*, 25, 1930, p. 9; (ii) Reuter, E.B.: *Population Problems*, Chicago, 1937, p. 353; (iii) Frank Notestein: *Differential Age at Marriage At Marriage According to Social Class*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 37, 1931, p. 22.



woman generally begins at the age of 15, the period of duration is taken to begin at that age in cases of women married at ages below 15.

In our data, the average duration of marriage for all men is 14.4 years (not considering cases of second and subsequent marriages). Community-wise, in proportion to their duration of marriage, the Christians have a higher fertility of 3.02 in an average duration of 14.2 years, whereas the Gujeratis have an average of 2.7 in a duration of 16.1 years. The Marathis have the lowest average fertility of only 1.5 in 11.6 years. The very low fertility of Marathi wives may not be due to their shorter average duration of marriage, for, by bringing its average to 16.1 years, which is the same for the average duration of a Gujerati marriage and then calculating the average fertility on this basis, still it comes to only 2.0, which is 0.7 less than that of Gujerati wives. The lowest average fertility of the Marathis has got to be explained by the fact that the extent of sterility among Marathi wives is larger. a point we shall come to later.

The duration of marriage of all the women employees is 20.3 years. Proportionately, the Gujerati women have the highest average fertility of 5.4 for an average duration of marriage of 22.4 years. The Marathi women are next in prolificness with an average of 4.4 in a duration of marriage of 19.3 years. The Christian women have the lowest average fertility of only 2.6 in an average period of marriage of 19.7 years which is 0.4 years longer than that of a Marathi marriage.

The average duration of marriage of men servants, taken for a computation of the fertility of their wives, is shorter than that of women servants. It must be pointed out here that this is due to the fact that where men are concerned, only the data regarding the period of duration of marriage with first wives is taken into consideration to avoid confusion.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, for women employees, the whole period of married life, irrespective of first or second marriage, is taken into consideration.

14. Incidentally, it may be added that, the average duration of the whole married life for all men servants is 17.4 years with an average of 3.1 children per man. The Gujerati men have a total average number of 3.4 children in 20.4 years; the Christians, 3.6 children in a total married life of 16.8 years and the Marathis, 1.9 children in 12.5 years of marriage.

In the case of both, the wives of men servants, and the women servants, on the whole, the average fertility has been observed to increase with an increasing duration of marriage. It is lowest for those marriages having a period of duration of less than 5 years, being 0.2 for the wives of men servants and 0.7 for the women servants. It is highest in case of marriages with a duration of over 40 years being 8 for the wives of men servants and 8.2 for the women servants.

The incidence of mortality among children is an important factor concerned in the average number of children born to a woman. So far we have seen the averages of the total fertility of the groups concerned. It is necessary now to take into account the effective fertility to find out the varying extents to which these groups successfully rear their children. For, in the words of Dr. T. H. C. Stevenson, "whatever their relationship of cause and effect, the closeness of the connection between fertility and mortality is of itself of importance in interpreting the records of fertility and child-mortality in the different strata of society."<sup>15</sup>

With a view to studying mortality rate and average survivalship among the total number of children born to the domestic servants, tables 11a and 11b have been prepared. They give the total number of children born to the women of each community, total number of surviving children, average number of surviving children per woman as against the average number born and the death rate per thousand. Table 11a gives details about wives of men domestics. Among Christian wives there is an average survivalship of 2.2 children as against an average 3.02 born. The Gujaratis have the lowest average of 1.6 surviving children as against an average of 2.7 born, whereas, the wives of Marathi servants have the highest average of 1.2 surviving out of an average of 1.5 born. The column giving the infant death rate in each community shows that the Gujaratis have the highest death rate of 417.3 per 1,000. Next come the Christians with a death rate of 257.3. The death rate for the children of the Marathis is the lowest, being 216.4 per 1,000 children born.

15. Dr. T. H. C. Stevenson: Fertility of Various Social Classes in England and Wales from the Middle of the 19th Century to 1911. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. 83, 1920.

TABLE 11a

TOTAL AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN:  
TOTAL AND AVERAGE NUMBER SURVIVING AND  
DEATH-RATE PER THOUSAND

*Wives of Men Domestics*

Community	Total No. of children born	Total No. of children surviving	Average No. of children born per woman	Average No. of children surviving	Death-rate per 1000
Christians	136	101	3.02	2.2	257.3
Gujeratis	206	120	2.7	1.6	417.3
Marathis	61	48	1.5	1.2	216.4
All Communities	403	269	2.5	1.7	306.4

The combined results for all the communities give a total of 269 surviving children out of 403 born which gives an average of 1.7 surviving out of 2.5 children born per woman and a death rate of 306.4 per 1,000.

Among women employees on the whole, as seen in table 11b, the average number of surviving children is 2.6 out of 4.3 born per woman. The Christian women have the highest number of average surviving children, 1.9 per woman out of an average of 2.6 born. The Marathi women have the lowest average of 2.3 surviving children out of an average of 4.4 born. The Gujarati women are mid-way between the two so far as the survival rate of their children is concerned, it being 3.7 out of an average number of 5.4 born. The total infant death rate for all women employees is 393.1 per 1,000 children born. Community-wise, the highest infant death rate of 474.4 is among the Marathi women, while the lowest death rate of 299.9 per 1,000 is among the Christians.

Comparing the results obtained from the two tables, we find that the wives of men servants have a proportionately higher average survival rate of 1.7 out of 2.5 children born per woman as against the 2.6 surviving children out of 4.3 born per woman among women servants. Conversely the infant death rate of 393.1

TABLE 11b

TOTAL AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN:  
TOTAL AND AVERAGE NUMBER SURVIVING AND  
DEATH-RATE PER THOUSAND

Community	Total No. of children born	Total No. of children surviving	Average No. of children born per woman	<i>Women Domestic</i>	
				Average No. of children surviving	Death-rate per 1000
Christians	117	82	2.6	1.9	299.9
Gujeratis	381	260	5.4	3.7	317.3
Marathis	489	257	4.4	2.3	474.4
All Communities	987	599	4.3	2.6	393.1

is higher for the children of women servants than 306.4 for the children of the wives of men servants.

We have so far considered only fertile women and their effective contribution to the next generation. The fertility of a group, as it can be easily seen, though actually speaking, depends only on the fertile women, in comparing total fertility of the two groups, the sterility rate of marriage has also to be taken into account. For our purposes, we consider only those women who, during their whole married life have not given birth to a single child living or dead with due attention to their age at marriage, duration of marriage and present age.

Our data show that out of a total 160 wives of men servants 47 are childless which makes 29.4 per cent of the total married. 12.8 per cent of these 47 childless wives are Christian, 43 per cent Gujarati and 44.2 per cent are Marathi. The highest percentage of the childless among Marathi wives may be therefore taken to explain the lowest average fertility of this group of women.

Among women servants there are only 24 childless women out of 225 married which makes 10.7 per cent of the total married women. Of these 24 childless women, 12.5 per cent are Christian, 16.5 per cent Gujarati, and 71 per cent Marathi. Here again the sterility is highest among Marathi women.

It has been observed in both instances that the largest number of sterile women were married at an age below 19. This is a strange occurrence, for, according to what is mentioned above the marriages performed at an age below 19 are the most fertile. If that is so, we conclude from our findings that in our sample, both the women with the highest average fertility, and the largest number of childless women were married at an age below 19. Childlessness is in greater proportion among wives of men servants than among women servants. This partially accounts for the higher fertility of the latter.

Since a longer duration of marriage diminishes the chances of a woman remaining childless, an effort is made to study the influence of this factor on the childlessness of the women. In our data about 89.3 per cent of the sterile wives of men servants and 62.5 per cent of the sterile women servants have a duration of marriage of less than 10 years. After 10 years of marriage there are only 10.7 per cent of the total childless wives, and 37.5 per cent of the total childless women servants in our sample, which shows that with the longer durations of marriage the incidence of sterility diminishes in conformation with the general expectation.

The present age of a woman is an important factor influencing the chances of her remaining sterile or not. After the age of 35, the possibilities of bearing a child for a woman, who has not borne a single child till that age, are comparatively few. The present average age of the wives of men servants interviewed is 28.5 years. Community-wise, the average age of the Christian wives is 35 years, that of the Gujarati wives is 33 years and that of the Marathi wives it is only 22.3 years. In view of the fact that the average age of the Marathi wives is much below 35, there is every likelihood of these women becoming fertile in years to come.

On the other hand, the present average age of all women servants is 35.8 years. For the Christian servants it is 45 years, for the Gujaratis, 42 years, and for the Marathis it is 32.5 years. The last mentioned may stand some chances of bearing children in the future in view of their present age being a little below 35. As for the former two, their sterility seems to be quite definitive, they having passed the age of 40.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF THE FAMILY

**THE FORM** and structure of the family as a unity of interacting personalities is relative to the economic and social organization of a given group under consideration. A close connection between the familial and wider social life of the individuals is always involved in family relations. Social, economic and occupational factors have had in all times and places an impact upon the organization of the family. In view of this we examine in this chapter the family patterns as they occur among our domestic servants.

The domestic servants are mostly members of migrant communities who have come to the city of Bombay in search of work owing to unemployment or under-employment in the rural areas, but at the same time having their roots firmly fixed in the villages. This factor of migration and mobility while ensuring them work in the city, has, in turn, been responsible for influencing the structure and composition of their family organization as will be seen from our study.

The large extended family, with a depth of three or four generations, has been a characteristic peculiar to Indian society. Industrialization all over the world, with its consequent rural-urban migration, has been largely responsible for the slow disintegration into smaller nuclear units of the extended family. "The historical disorganization of the large family pattern," says Harvey Locke, "was related to cultural conflict, the removal of the buttressing support of other institutions, and the mere distance between the members of the large family. . . The adoption of the small family pattern was forced upon some people because of the greater ease of movement of the individual family unit as contrasted with the difficulty of movement of the large family. Once the two patterns were present in a given cultural area, the greater utility of the small family led to the gradual disuse of the large

family system".<sup>1</sup> Hence the withdrawal of the support of the traditional economic, political, religious and other institutions along with the mere spatial distance between the members weakened the large family system with the march of Industrialism and Urbanism.

However, with respect to Indian conditions the situation is somewhat different as I. P. Desai maintains. The old-style joint or extended family is no doubt a rarity in the contemporary Indian social structure. With numerous arguments in his analysis he ultimately stresses that, "Though the range of relationship has contracted in the changed circumstances, the joint family as a set of relationships and as a functioning unit is alive much more than is commonly supposed".<sup>2</sup> This opinion is also supported by Dr. K. M. Kapadia.<sup>3</sup>

In the light of the above considerations we attempt to investigate the family patterns among domestic servants and see how far migration to an urban area has been responsible in disintegrating the large traditional family system as is generally expected, or to what extent the extended family still remains a predominant feature even among the lower classes of Indian society as represented by our domestic servants. For all outward appearances the families are as varied as individual cases, but the patterns that emerge on deeper scrutiny are capable of being subjected to tabulation and analysis.

In order to understand the impact of rural-urban migration on the structure of family it is important to consider the number of people having their families left behind in the native place and of those having their families migrated to the city. In our data among men domestics, out of 233 persons, 82.4 per cent have their families in the native place, whereas, only 17.6 per cent have them in the city. All the three communities have a large majority of their families living in the villages. Of these, the Marathis have the highest number, 91.1 per cent of the families

1. Locke Harvey J: Mobility And Family Disorganization. *American Sociological Review* 5, 1940. p. 494.
2. I. P. Desai: Symposium on Caste and Joint Family. An Analysis—*Sociological Bulletin*, V, September 1955, p. 100.
3. Kapadia K. M.: op. cit.

in the villages and the Christians the lowest, being 71.6 per cent. The Gujaratis have 83.7 per cent of them in the villages. Six Christians and one Marathi are single individuals not affiliated to any family.

As for the families of women domestics the situation is entirely reverse. Here we have found that on the whole 16.2 per cent of the families are in their native place and they are all Christian. A large majority of them, 83.8 per cent are families migrated to Bombay. The Gujarati and the Marathi women, all have their families residing in the city with only a few distant relatives left in the villages. On the other hand the Christian women show a deviation. 65 per cent of their families are in the villages and only 35 per cent are in Bombay. Ten Christian women, two Gujarati and seven Marathi women are single individuals with no family attachments.

Approaching the problem of family from the structural point of view we set out to determine the proportion of nuclear to extended families in the rural and the urban areas, for this approach is likely to shed more light on the urban influence on family patterns of the domestic servants.

Reading table 12a showing the correlation between the location and the structure of the family, we find that among men servants, there is a preponderance of the large extended over the nuclear families in the rural areas, they being 64.1 per cent of the total rural families as against 35.9 per cent of the latter. The Gujarati and the Marathi communities both show a higher incidence of extended families in the villages than of the nuclear families. Only among the Christians the pattern is reverse. Here we have 54.7 per cent of nuclear families as compared with 45.3 per cent of the extended. It may mean that among the Christians even in the rural areas there is a growing tendency of breaking away from the parental home after marriage and setting up individual families on the part of men.

The picture is different when we view the structure of the family in the urban area. Here we find that 73.2 per cent of the families in Bombay are nuclear, whereas only 26.8 per cent are extended. All the communities taken separately more or less show the same incidence varying only in intensity or degree, although



TABLE 12a

STRUCTURE OF FAMILIES IN THE NATIVE PLACE AND  
IN BOMBAY OF*Men Domestics*

<i>Families In The Native Place</i>								
Structure of the Families	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Nuclear	29	54.7	14	20.9	26	36.1	69	35.9
Extended	24	45.3	53	79.1	46	63.9	123	64.1
Total	53	100	67	100	72	100	192	100

<i>Families in Bombay</i>								
Structure of the Families	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Nuclear	18	85.7	8	61.5	4	57.1	30	73.2
Extended	3	14.3	5	38.5	3	42.9	11	26.8
Total	21	100	13	100	7	100	41	100

we can say that the Christians have the highest number of nuclear families, they being 85.7 per cent as against 61.5 and 57.1 per cent among the Gujaratis and the Marathis. The latter two have a significant proportion, 38.5 and 42.9 per cent respectively, of extended families in the city. The general assumption that people in big cities and towns tend to live in nuclear families and that

urbanism has disintegrative influences on the structure of the family does seem to hold good to a certain extent, therefore, for the men domestic servants as the above observations seem to show.

Let us view the situation among the families of women domestic servants. A priori we should not be expecting women

TABLE 12b

STRUCTURE OF FAMILIES IN THE NATIVE PLACE AND  
IN BOMBAY OF*Women Domestics*

<i>Families In the Native Place</i>								
Structure of the Families	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Nuclear	28	71.8	—	—	—	—	28	71.8
Extended	11	28.2	—	—	—	—	11	28.2
Total	39	100	—	—	—	—	39	100

<i>Families In Bombay</i>								
Structure of the Families	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Nuclear	16	76.2	40	55.0	36	33.3	92	45.5
Extended	5	23.8	33	45.0	72	66.7	100	54.5
Total	21	100	73	100	108	100	202	100

domestics having families in the mofussil, because a woman in India would hardly be allowed to leave her family in the village where she would be a greater asset, and go to the city for work. This expectation is fulfilled by our sample, though we must admit that it is not a very representative one. Therefore, the data for the rural families being so insufficient, no definite conclusions could be drawn.

The Gujarati and the Marathi women have only a few distant relatives staying in the villages to whom help in the form of remittance of money occasionally is rendered as will be seen later. The only 39 rural families that are there as seen in table 12b belong to the Christian women, and of these 71.8 per cent are nuclear while only 28.2 per cent are extended. The picture revealed in the pattern of urban families is rather interesting. Contrary to our expectations, here there is a higher proportion of extended families, they being 54.5 per cent as compared with 45.5 per cent of the nuclear. Scrutinizing the table community-wise, we find that although among the Christians and the Gujaratis there is a higher incidence of nuclear families in the city, it is the Marathi group which brings up the percentage of the extended families in the total, there being 66.7 per cent of the extended units as against only 33.3 per cent of the nuclear in this community. It is strange that urban influences have not sufficiently succeeded in affecting the Marathi women's families where joint-living still persists.

Therefore, in the case of women servants the assumption that urban families are predominantly nuclear holds good only for the Christian and the Gujarati communities and not for the Marathis.

An estimate of the proportion of the two main types of family in the rural and urban areas makes it essential to analyse further the structure of that type of family which we have so far named the 'extended' family. For as we shall see, several patterns differing from each other from the point of relationship, commensality, common residence etc., are included within the term 'extended'.

The extended family may be understood as a family group having a generation depth of three or more, and the members of

which besides their common relationship, are conditioned by common property, income and mutual rights and obligations, differing from the nuclear family composed solely of husband, wife and unmarried children.

The extended family, as distinguished from the nuclear, may be classified into five different sub-types each having its own separate characteristics. The first of these is the undivided family composed of either both or one or other of the parents, their married sons and sons' wives and children, and unmarried sons and daughters, father's father and mother and brothers all living in a common residence, having common property, income and expenditure. The second is the same type of the undivided family as far as relationships go, living in the same household, but here the members do not pool their incomes together. They incur separate expenditure and each small family unit within the matrix of the larger one, has its own hearth. The ancestral property in the form of land is also very often divided among the co-parceners. The old father and the mother are in many cases maintained by one or other of the sons.

The third type is again the same undivided family; but only some of its members live together, others having been branched off from the main family, and having formed their own individual nuclear families, although retaining certain relations with the original undivided family. We call this type partially undivided and partially nuclear.

The fourth type of the extended family is the joint family composed of two or more unmarried and married brothers living in the same household with their wives and children, but without their father and mother, sharing together the family income and expenditure. The fifth type is the same joint family but here as in the second type the members do not share their incomes and expenditures although they live in the same household.

Lastly there are deviant cases of families which are difficult to be classed as the members composing these units, living in a common residence, bear relationships to each other not commonly found in the usual undivided or joint families. For instance, some of them are cases where agnatic as well as cognatic relatives i.e., members of both the husband's and the wife's family reside in

a common household sometimes pooling their incomes jointly, sometimes not. In some instances it is a case of matrilocal residence, where the daughter being the only child is made to stay with her parents' family after the marriage along with her husband. Such cases being aberrant from the traditional patterns, we call them deviant families.

This classification into types helps us to understand the present trends in the contemporary forms of the large extended fa-

TABLE 13a

DISTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF FAMILIES OF  
*Men Domestics*

Structure of Family	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Nuclear	47	63.5	22	27.5	30	38.0	99	42.5
Extended	27	36.5	58	72.5	49	62.0	134	57.5
Sub-Types of the Extended and Percentage to the Total No. of Extended Families								
I. Undivided with common residence and common expenditure	12	44.5	30	52.0	33	67.2	75	56.0
II. Undivided with common residence but separate expenditure	2	7.4	4	6.8	—	—	6	4.5
III. Partially undivided partially nuclear	5	18.5	6	10.3	2	4.1	13	9.7
IV. Joint with common residence and common expenditure	2	7.4	6	10.3	7	14.3	15	11.2
V. Joint with common residence but separate expenditure	—	—	6	10.3	4	8.2	10	7.4
VI. Deviant families	6	22.2	6	10.3	3	6.1	15	11.2
Total of Extended Families	27	100	58	100	49	100	134	100

mily among the lower classes of Indian society. Referring to the tables 13a and 13b for the distribution of the different types of family we find that among men domestics there are on the whole 42.5 per cent nuclear families and 57.5 per cent extended families. The Gujeratis and the Marathis both have a higher percentage of the extended families than that of the nuclear, they being 72.5 and 62 per cent respectively. It is only the Christians who show a larger number of nuclear families than the extended ones, they being 63.5 per cent. Coming to the different types of the extended family, the largest number, 56 per cent of the extended, belong to type I where we have the pattern of an undivided family with common residence and common income and expenditure. This is the traditional type of the Indian family. All the three communities invariably conform to this; the Christians having 44.5, the Gujeratis 52, and the Marathis 67.2 per cent of their extended families of this particular type. Only 4.5 per cent of the extended families are of the second type which differs from the first in that there is no commensality among the members of the family.

The next largest group of families belongs to type IV, they being 11.2 per cent where the family is joint consisting of married brothers and their wives and children, without their father or mother, sharing a common residence, and sharing incomes and expenditures together. The same type of families, but with separate hearths within them, represented by type V, are about 7.4 per cent. This shows that, whereas, there is a great difference in numbers between types I and II, there is a very small difference in numbers between types IV and V which may lead us to infer that when parents are alive the family is most often joint for all purposes, but when there are no parents and only the married brothers are living together with their wives and children there is an increasing tendency not to share incomes and expenditures i.e., to keep separate harths in the same household.

9.7 pr cent of the extended families are partially undivided and partially nuclear which bespeaks the tendency of one of the sons or brothers breaking away from the undivided family and setting up an individual household of his own after marriage. Very often constant quarrels between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law are responsible for this type of arrangement. Sometimes it is owing to economic and occupational exigencies,

and not owing to marriage that one of the sons or brothers has to set up a separate family in the city or in a different part of the same village. But, for all other purposes he usually keeps close ties with the family of his parents and brothers. It shows that though a part of a family group may reside separately it continues to be joint in property and other obligations.

The deviant cases of families, i.e., families that could not fall under any one of the above categories are 11.2 per cent of the total extended. Here, in most cases the extension is either on two sides, the husband's as well as the wife's or it is the extension of the wife's family which does not conform to the prevalent pattern of patrilocality in our society. All the three communities have cases of such divergent families, the Christians having the largest number, 22.2 per cent and the Marathis the smallest, 6.1 per cent, of their extended families belonging to this type. The occurrence of the deviant types of families may be explained thus: Firstly, as we mentioned before, a girl may be the only daughter in the family and therefore all the care and affection are lavished upon her by the parents who would not like to part with her after her marriage. Therefore they arrange to keep her with her husband and subsequently her children in her parental home, whereas, on the other hand her husband has to sever all ties with his own family and become one with the family of his wife. Secondly, it so happens, as in the case of the family of a Marathi servant, that on the death of her husband, a woman leaves the home of her in-laws where she now finds little comfort and recognition, and goes back to her own parents' family along with her children. She thus shows preference for the family of her own parents than for that of her husband's when the latter is no longer alive. And lastly, as it is commonly found in the city, owing to great difficulty in securing accommodation, sometimes, the relatives of the wife, on their arrival in Bombay are absorbed in the husband's family and all the members begin to reside together in one household as one family, either sharing the income and expenditure, or preferring to keep them separate according to individual wishes. For the same reason a married sister and her husband and children are given shelter under the roof of a joint or undivided family thereby affecting the structure of the original family.

Referring to the table 13b showing different family patterns of the women domestic servants, we find that there is an ignorable difference between the number of nuclear and extended families, the former being 49.9 per cent, the latter 50.1 per cent of the total number of families. This is due to a very high percentage of

TABLE 13b

DISTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF FAMILIES OF  
*Women Domestics*

Structure of Family	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Nuclear	44	73.0	40	55.0	36	33.5	120	49.9
Extended	16	27.0	33	45.0	72	66.5	121	50.1

Sub-Types of the Extended and Percentage to the Total  
No. of Extended Families

I. Undivided with common residence and common expenditure	7	43.7	21	64.0	37	51.5	65	53.3
II. Undivided with common residence but separate expenditure	—	—	2	6.0	10	13.9	12	9.7
III. Partially undivided partially nuclear	—	—	1	3.0	—	—	1	.8
IV. Joint with common residence and common expenditure	1	6.3	4	12.0	3	4.2	8	6.5
V. Joint with common residence but separate expenditure	1	6.3	1	3.0	4	5.4	6	4.8
VI. Deviant families	7	43.7	4	12.0	18	25.0	29	25.0
Total of Extended Families	16	100	33	100	72	100	121	100



the nuclear families of the Christians and the Gujaratis, they being 73 and 55 per cent respectively. It is only among the Marathi women that the number of their nuclear families is half the number of the extended ones.

Taking into account the different types of the extended families, we find that here, as before, the majority of them 53.3 per cent fall in the first category where the family is undivided for all purposes including residence and commensality, whereas, there are only 9.7 per cent of the undivided families where the members do not pool their incomes jointly, and have separate hearths. There is but one family which is partially undivided and partially nuclear and that is from the Gujarati group of women. The joint families with common income and expenditure are slightly greater in number than those in which the members do not share their incomes and expenses, the former being 6.6 and the latter 4.8 per cent of all extended families.

What strikes us in this table is the large number of deviant families. They are about 25 per cent of the total extended families. The Christians have 43.7, whereas, the Marathis 25, and the Gujaratis 12 per cent of their extended families of the deviant type. This considerable proportion of divergence from the conventional pattern may be explained by the fact that about 83.8 per cent of the families of women domestic servants reside in the city and it is the influence of the city with its acute housing shortage that may be responsible for the formation of such deviant family patterns.

This particular phenomenon of housing shortage and overcrowding in the city affects the families in other ways also. On the one hand very often an undivided or a joint family is forced to break up into smaller individual units for lack of space in the one-room tenements which are the usual lot of our domestic servants as will be seen later. On the other hand a large family is obliged to remain undivided under one roof because of difficulties involved in obtaining accommodation in the city, thus preventing its members from setting up separate households according to their individual inclinations thereby causing overcrowding in an already cramped environment.

From the above two tables a general observation may be made that among extended families the undivided family with the father and/or mother, married sons and their wives and children along with unmarried sons and daughters living in a common residence with income and expenditure shared in common is still the prevalent type. The modern tendency, however, is to keep joint relations with one's own married sons and their wives and children, rather than with one's collaterals i.e., brothers, and their wives and children. In some cases, deviating from the conventional pattern, even a married daughter with her husband and children is kept in closer relations, often sharing the family income and expenditure, whereas, one's own married brothers and their families, although sharing a common residence, do not share the same mutual relations with a man. This may be due to greater emotional attachment to one's own children and grand-children rather than to one's brothers and their children. The comparatively smaller incidence of joint families without the father and the mother indicates, that the tendency of married sons living jointly after the death of the father is not quite common.

Mention should be made of the fact that although an attempt has been made to tabulate as accurately as possible the various types of families, placing them in each category, they all do not conform to any rigid, hard and fast pattern. Even in families tabulated as undivided and joint with the relationships of their members with one another defined, we find in them the presence of relatives who are adjuncts to the main family, and who by right have no place in them. Such are, for instance, widowed or divorced sisters or daughters with their children, a woman's unmarried brother or sister living in her husband's family, a maternal grandfather or grandmother, an uncle or an aunt, or a more distant relative, who for some reason or another have come to be included in some of the undivided or joint families. Even some of the nuclear families defined as groups composed of father, mother and unmarried children are not altogether devoid of an additional distant or close relative, which could go by the name of nuclear families with extension.

There are about 40 families which have additional relatives, out of a total number of 430 nuclear, undivided and joint families, i.e., about 9.3 per cent in all, not to speak of the deviant

cases. In fact in some families the interviewee himself or herself is an additional relative staying in an otherwise nuclear, undivided or joint family of some relatives. Thus for instance there are about 9 women who are staying as adjuncts with the family of either a married sister, or a married daughter, or a father's brother or own brother, in some cases they being women separated from their own husbands and given refuge by their benevolent relatives. The presence of such additional relatives in a household is an indication of a deep sense of family responsibility present in the lower classes of our society, which is of no little sociological significance.

This sense of family responsibility of the members towards each other is also borne out in the manner in which the members run to each other's help in times of economic distress such as old age and periods of unemployment. However meagre the earnings of our domestic servants may be, instances are not wanting which show that altruistic sentiment towards members of family residentially separate is not altogether lacking in them in the moment of need. Even cognatic relatives are not neglected in some cases.

For instance we have 8 persons in our sample who have to maintain unemployed married sons and their wives and children, 6 who maintain the families of their married daughters because their husbands are unemployed; 9 persons look after their aged parents or parents-in-law and 6 others help their married brothers' families. Unmarried or divorced or widowed sisters and daughters along with their children are maintained by 4 persons, while brothers' widows and children are also not neglected. There are 5 persons in our sample who have to support them. One Christian woman who has no relatives, maintains 3 of her dead husband's brother's children whereas, a father's brother's wife is also taken care of by a Marathi man servant.

On the other hand we may also refer to cases where persons from our sample receive financial help from other members of family either because their own income is very inadequate or when they are unemployed. Thus 4 persons are helped by their own father or mother or even by their own parents-in-law; 2 are supported by sons and 2 by brothers in times of unemployment,

while other 2 persons receive help from distant well-to-do relatives.

From the above examples it is evident that in many cases whether the members of a family reside together or not, whether they share their incomes and expenditures jointly or not, their sentiments towards each other always become manifest in times of crisis.

A word may be added that the apparently nuclear families in our tables are not all entirely nuclear ones, i.e., though such families may be living separately from their other relatives keeping their property and incomes to themselves, all of them are not devoid of rights and obligations towards others related to them by kinship. Thus 13 per cent of the nuclear families of men domestics and 42 per cent of the nuclear families of the women domestics keep connections with other relatives by way of sending them financial help every month or at least occasionally and sharing their house when they visit their native place, and for various other social purposes.

What I. P. Desai says about joint family in general may well be applied to the families of the individuals in our sample. "Co-residence and commensality are neither adequate nor reliable criteria for judging the type of the family. We do not deny the tendency to establish separate households. But we cannot accept it as the explanation of the frequency distribution of the different types of households".<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere he writes, "the jointness of the separated units consists in the rights and obligations of the members of different units towards one another and in the feeling of oneness".<sup>5</sup>

But there is also another side of the picture. While on the one hand we have referred to instances where the joint family sentiment still persists among members of separated units we have also got evidence of neglect and indifference. It is not difficult to explain the occurrence of such a situation in view of the fact that in most families of our domestic servants all the members do not stay together at the same time. Some of them are

4. I. P. Desai: *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

usually away from their families to meet the demands of their respective occupations in the city. This mere separation in space of the members through their differential mobility is considerably responsible for the lessening of concern shown by the members to each other. And in some cases, instead of the absence making the heart grow fonder it turns out to be the other way round, where family members who are out of sight, gradually go out of mind!

Commenting on this point Harvey Locke explains, "Movement as such... will cause a breakdown of psychological and social relationships among the members. The mere distance of the members from each other means that they will see and communicate with each other only occasionally with the result that the family will lose its primary significance for them."<sup>6</sup>

Let us see to what extent the above remarks hold true for the families of the individuals in our sample. We have five cases where the brothers of the individuals concerned, working in different parts of the city do not send any money to augment the family income, with the result the burden of supporting aged parents and younger brothers and sisters falls only on a limited number of persons. Three Christian men domestics, one of them an orphan, claim to have no family affiliations although they have married or unmarried brothers and sisters scattered either in Bombay or in the native place. In times of unemployment no help whatever is received from their own brothers. The members of such families hardly have any occasion to come together, and very often they are not even acquainted with the activities of each other. There are four instances where one son or the other, of the individuals interviewed does not help his respective family financially. One aged Gujarati couple have four married sons all separated from the parental family who hardly look after the parents with the result the latter, who are over 70 years of age, have to work as domestic servants to keep body and soul together. One Christian woman domestic instead of being supported in her old age by her two sons, herself sends them money every month, while a Marathi woman also has two married sons living sepa-

rately who are indifferent to their own mother who is forced to make her own living.

Widowed women are usually likely to be neglected by the members of their husband's family. A widowed Marathi woman servant receives no share from the land of her husband's family in the village while a young Marathi man servant has a widowed mother in the village not supported by her own husband's brothers.

A Gujarati woman, with great difficulty maintains an unemployed husband who has well-to-do brothers not caring for him in the least. Two Christian men domestics have parents and younger brothers and sisters in the native place with whom they have hardly kept any connections except for an occasional visit once in 8 or 10 years. They do not send any money to their parents.

Although there are such instances of family neglect due to spatial separation on the part of the members, they being few and far between, compared to the size of our sample, we should not be driven to generalize that family sentiment is lacking in the lower classes of our society. Such cases are only exceptions for we have already shown above that there are many instances as against these few where we have evidence of family solidarity as manifested by the altruistic sentiments shown by the members of even separated families towards each other especially in times of difficulty.

One fact which was observed especially among the families of the Christian domestic servants and which deserves mention here is that there is a large proportion of dispersion among the members of the family. Very often we find families where the wife is working as a domestic servant in one household, the husband in another household, or if he is not residing as a servant with some employer's family, he may be occupied elsewhere and putting up in a communal club. Again, the children may be working in some other part of the city and staying in another communal club, or, if very young, they may be either taken care of by some relatives in the native place, or kept in a missionary boarding school. Thus there is no one particular place where the whole family resides, but it is scattered all over, with the members meet-

ing each other only occasionally or on festivals. This dispersion of the several members of a family may put the members in contact with different patterns of behaviour leading to the development of divergent behaviour in these members and resulting in incompatibility within the family as Locke has suggested. "These differences in contacts may result in the disruption of either the inner unity or the structural form of the family or both".<sup>7</sup> The members in such families generally tend to become individualized.

Having analysed the different types of family and the structure and composition of the family organization among the domestic servants in our sample it would be appropriate now to analyse the families from the point of view of their size, i.e., from the point of view of the number of persons constituting the different families.

Table 14a gives the average number of persons living in nuclear and extended families of the men domestic servants. We find that the average size of a nuclear family is 4.5 and that of the extended family is 8.3. There are no great differences between the average size of each respective type of family in the three com-

TABLE 14a

## AVERAGE SIZE OF NUCLEAR AND EXTENDED FAMILIES

*Men Domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Total
Total number of Nuclear families	47	22	30	99
Average size of Nuclear families	4.8	3.9	4.5	4.5
Total number of Extended families	27	58	49	134
Average size of Extended families	8.8	7.8	8.8	8.3

7. Ibid., p. 489.

munities taken separately. However, the Christian families, nuclear as well as extended, are slightly larger than those of either the Gujaratis or the Marathis, their average size being 4.8 and 8.8 respectively. Compared with those of the other two communities, the Gujarati nuclear as well as extended families are the smallest, their average size being 3.9 and 7.8 respectively. The average size of the extended families of the Marathis is the same as that of the Christian extended families, it being 8.8, whereas the average size of the Marathi nuclear family is only 0.3 smaller than that of the Christian nuclear family.

Table 14b shows similar data for the families of women domestic servants. Here we see that the average size of the nuclear families is exactly the same as that of the nuclear families of men servants, it being 4.5. The average size of the extended family is 7.7 which is only 0.6 smaller than that of the average extended family of the men servants. In this table we observe that the average size of the Gujarati nuclear as well as extended family is larger than that of either the Christian or the Marathi families, the nuclear being 5.1 and the extended 8.5. This is the reverse of what we found in the previous table for men. There, the Gujarati families were the smallest among the three communities.

TABLE 14b

## AVERAGE SIZE OF NUCLEAR AND EXTENDED FAMILIES

*Women Domestics*

	Christians	Gujaratis	Marathis	Total
Total number of Nuclear families	44	40	36	120
Average size of Nuclear families	4.5	5.1	4.0	4.5
Total number of Extended families	16	33	72	121
Average size of Extended families	7.2	8.5	7.4	7.7



The smallest nuclear families among the women, belong to the Marathi group, their average size being only 4; whereas, the smallest extended families are among the Christians with an average size of 7.2, though this does not differ much from the average Marathi extended family the size of which is 7.4.

The size of the families of the domestic servants in our sample has been observed to range from 2 to 29 members. However, almost half the number of the families of both men and women are those composed of 4 to 7 members each. This is found to be more or less true for all the three communities. It is also important to note that a significant number of families, 21.3 per cent of those of men and 15.5 per cent of those of women have a strength of 8 to 10 persons each. Very large families of 11 to 17 members are not unknown among our domestic servants for they constitute 9.3 per cent of the total number of families of men, and 7.4 per cent of those of women. There are only 2 families composed of 22 and 29 members respectively and they both belong to 2 Christian men domestics.

There are 7 men and 19 women who are singleton cases in our sample, and they deserve more than passing reference. Such persons need greater attention than others, for they are individuals detached from the satisfying associations of family life and thrown into the hub of the city to eke out their own living. They no doubt have distant and even close relatives scattered all over the place but hardly any relations are maintained with them, and solitary living is preferred to putting up with any one of them. Some indeed do not even have a place that they can call a home, and reside either with the family of their employers or cast their lot with persons in similar circumstances in some communal club.

In the Christian community there are on the whole more instances, about 21.8 per cent, of lonely individuals than in either the Gujerati or the Marathi community. In fact among the Gujeratis there are only two such cases and they are both women.

Among Christian men, out of 6 singleton cases, 5 are unmarried persons who have no parents, and if they have any brothers and sisters, they have nothing to do with them for no ties are maintained with them. Four of them stay at the place of service and are also members of communal clubs, while one stays

in a communal club. One man has been deserted by his wife and has no children alive. Finding no place to live in, he also puts up in a club.

As for the Christian women, 10 out of 70, i.e., 14.3 per cent, are lonely individuals. Six of them are widows, 2 are women deserted by their husbands, and 2 are unmarried girls aged 17 and 20. Four women have married daughters whose families they help financially, but they prefer to stay alone on their own either at the place of service or in communal clubs. Four others have no children and are therefore all the more lonely. One of the two unmarried girls has brothers and sisters but they are all staying apart, she herself staying in a communal club. The other one orphaned from childhood and only 17 years old, has no such relatives and lives only at the mercy of her employers in their house, at the same time retaining the membership of a club. The case of one deserted woman is tragic indeed, for at the time of enquiry she was unemployed, and having no family members to turn to for support, she was steeped in debt.

Among the Gujerati women there are only two cases of solitary individuals. One is a widow who has a married daughter who lived with her before, but left the mother's house because the mother and the son-in-law could not get along together. The woman lives alone now in a small room shared with another family. The other woman has deserted her husband whom she said she did not like. She has no children of her own and lives alone.

In the Marathi community, among men there is only one individual who has no family of his own. Orphaned from childhood, he was brought up by a mother's brother in the village, for whom he still bears feelings of reverence and gratitude. He is unmarried at 27 and at present stays at the place of service.

On the other hand among Marathi women there are 7 such persons who live alone. Of these, 6 are widows and 1 is a woman deserted by her husband. Three women have no children of their own, whereas 2 have married daughters in the native place with whom only little connection is kept. The case of a widowed woman with two sons living apart has already been mentioned.

The sons do not support the old mother who lives in the city in a small room shared by another family in a chawl. A case of sheer neglect in old age! The woman who is deserted by her husband, has no children, and no home for herself. She stays with her employer's family. *Domestic service is no doubt an occupation that very often provides refuge to the homeless who have no families to turn to for comfort and support.* It often inculcates in the minds of the workers, who are emotionally isolated the sense of belongingness, identifying themselves with the employer's family.

## CHAPTER V

### HOUSING CONDITIONS

*"The House is the temple of family-life and its soundness is closely inter-locked with family health".<sup>1</sup>*

The survey of the domestic servants of the city of Bombay primarily necessitated a personal visit to some of the chawls and quarters situated in the different localities stretching from Matunga in the north to Colaba at the southern tip. In this manner first-hand impressions were gathered of the conditions in which the domestic servants are housed in the city. The spectacle of the sordid state of affairs, to a greater or lesser extent, that met the eye, varied from place to place, but some of the characteristic features common to all were enough to leave an indelible impress on the mind of the investigator.

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the study of the housing of a given group of persons, for housing affects directly the family, and through it, social relations. A home is after all a dwelling permeated with human feeling, where the family as an organic unit of society, carries on the relationships incident to family-life. The essential purpose of housing, therefore, is to provide the conditions of comfort, health, and enjoyment that are required for the making of a home and the development of the primary form of social life — family-life. It is then the task of the observer to find out how far the three conditions of comfort, health and enjoyment are satisfied in the habitations of the domestic servants.

The domestic servants are of two classes — the resident and non-resident; and consequently their housing arrangements will differ according as they reside at the place of occupation, or in their own private quarters. It is of primary importance therefore, to determine the nature of residence of the individuals in our

1. Mackintosh J. M. : *Housing And Family-Life*, (Preface) London, 1952.

sample. We find in table 15a that 88 per cent of the men domestics live at the place of service, 10.4 per cent in private quarters and 2.1 per cent in communal residential clubs. All the three communities, more or less show a similar tendency, the Marathis, however, being the group where the largest number of men, about 90 per cent in all, reside at place of service. Of the 5 persons living in communal clubs, 4 are Christian and 1 Gujarati.

TABLE 15a

RESIDENCE PRIVATE OR AT PLACE OF SERVICE OF

*Men Domestics*

Nature of Residence	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
At place of service	69	86.3	69	86.3	72	90	210	88
Private	7	8.7	10	12.5	8	10	25	10.4
in communal club	4	5	1	1.2	—	—	5	2.1
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

There is no Marathi man servant living in a communal club which may indicate that there may be no such arrangements of communal living to be found among the domestic servants in the Marathi community.

The table 15b for the women domestics presents a different situation. A priori, we should not be expecting many women residing at the place of service. This is so, firstly, because as we have seen in a previous chapter, the families, especially of the

Gujerati and the Marathi women are settled in the city and therefore there is no need for these women to stay at the place of service. And secondly, Hindu women generally would not be allowed to leave their own households and stay with the families of their employers to meet the demands of their occupation. This is supported by the figures in table 15b. Here we have only 24.6 per cent of women living at the place of service, while 72.5 per cent live in their own houses, and 3.1 per cent in residential clubs. If we read the table community-wise, it becomes clear that a majority of the women staying at the place of service are Christian. They form a good 83 per cent of the total number of Christian women. There is not a single Gujarati woman residing with the employer's family, while we find only 6 Marathi women, i.e., 5.2 per cent of them living at the place of service. On further investigation of their cases it is found that out of these 6 Marathi women, 4 are widows, and 1 is deserted by her husband and is a lonely individual. Two of the widows are also singleton cases with no families or children of their own. Only one woman

TABLE 15b

RESIDENCE PRIVATE OR AT PLACE OF SERVICE OF

*Women Domestics*

Nature of Residence	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
At place of service	58	83	—	—	6	5.2	64	24.6
Private	4	5.7	75	100	109	95	188	72.5
In communal club	8	11.4	—	—	—	—	8	3.1
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

has a husband living, but he being a paralytic individual is sent away to the native place while his wife is staying at the place where she is working as a domestic servant. Hence we can say, as far as our sample goes, that residence at the place of service is restricted mainly to the Christian women, the Hindu women that are residing there are generally widows or women without families of their own. Only 5.7 per cent of the Christian women live in their private quarters, while 11.4 per cent of them live in communal residential clubs.

Mention must be made of the fact that although 69 out of 80 Christian men, and 58 out of 70 Christian women reside at the place of service, 40 men and 7 women are also members of communal clubs where they keep part of their belongings and pay a nominal monthly rent of about Re. 1-8 as to Rs. 2-8 as. This sort of an arrangement ensures them a place to resort to when turned out from service by their employers. However, it is a pity that this type of convenience is to be found mainly in the Christian community. The Gujarati<sup>2</sup> and the Marathi men servants hardly having such living facilities are often thrown out into the streets on finding themselves suddenly unemployed. In such circumstances they have to resort to the quarters of friends or members of community, or in default of that, they leave the city and go back to their homes in the villages for several months.

Having ascertained the proportion of resident and non-resident servants in our sample we attempt to sketch the conditions of accommodation as they are actually found in their respective housing arrangements. We first take up the case of those persons residing at the place of occupation. The task of investigating such individuals would have been a far more difficult one, but for the special provision for accommodation of the domestic servants to be found in the flats and bungalows of employers in some of the well-to-do localities of Bombay. The separate rooms allotted to the use of servants go by the name of "servants' quarters" which are to be found in the backyards of fashionable buildings where the picture of life and living is just the reverse of what is to be found in the more elegant frontages.

2. Only one Gujarati male servant was reported to be living in a communal club. Such clubs are rare, however, and restricted to members only of a particular village.

The entrance to the servants' quarters is from the back. Usually a narrow, winding iron stair-case, meant only for the use of servants and hawkers, and quite a distinctive feature of the servants' quarters, leads one to the servants' rooms on each storey. This particular type of a stair-case is rather dangerous and slippery especially in the rainy season, but the servants seem to have got quite used to it, for, very often they are to be found playing a lively game of cards or enjoying a quiet smoke sitting right in the middle of the stair-case during afternoon hours. Sometimes, especially when the servants' quarters are included in the main building and not detached from it, there may not be such an outwardly visible iron stair-case; but just an ordinary flight of steps made of rough stone may serve the purpose. What strikes one while going up any of these steps is that in contrast to some of the immaculately polished stair-cases in the front part of the buildings, they are usually littered with rubbish and dirt.

A small, dark passage leads one to the various rooms of the servants on each floor. The passage itself is put to several uses. It is sometimes used for sleeping when there is not enough room inside, or it is filled with the belongings of the servants themselves. The rooms of the servants are usually situated near the kitchen. Inside the rooms, occasionally, one or two coir-rope charpoys are found, and put to several uses besides sleeping. But usually the servants sleep on the floor, their beddings being folded up along the walls during the day. Steel or wooden trunks and boxes contain their clothes and other belongings, and they are often used as chairs. There may be one or two small wooden stools which are offered to friends when they visit the servants. The walls are decorated with calendars and pictures. Whether the servants are Hindus or Christians, almost in all servants' quarters, a small portion on the wall is kept aside as an altar where the pictures of their respective saints and gods are placed and where offerings in the form of flowers and incense are made almost every day. The domestic servants, no doubt, are deeply religious.

The quarters of the servants are not badly lighted nor badly ventilated. There is none of the stifling overcrowded atmosphere which one finds in the dwellings occupied by the non-resident servants. There are always one or two windows and the rooms



are generally provided with electric lights in most cases. Individual water-taps are the only things missing here. But then, there are arrangements made for a privy and a bath-room on each floor which are used in common by the servants, both men and women, of three or four tenants. It is rather an unwholesome thing that women servants should be made to share the same bathrooms and privies with men servants.

The servants living in servants' quarters do not have a water problem as they can always have a sufficient supply from the adjoining kitchens of their employers.

The one thing that is noted about the servants' quarters in Bombay is that usually only one room in each flat is kept aside for the servants, where such arrangements are to be found. With the result, all the servants of one employer are dumped together in that one room irrespective of their status. Naturally when there are both male and female servants working together in one household, the females cannot be expected to avail themselves of the servants' quarters and have to be content with any small corner provided for them inside the house of the employer, which may very often be a part of the kitchen itself. Only in the bungalows of the upper-most classes does one come across separate cottage-like quarters, often in a dilapidated condition, with two or three rooms, at the back of the compound, slightly detached from the main bungalow. Here there is a possibility for providing separate quarters for the male and female domestics.

The Malis or gardeners, it was observed, are invariably housed separately from the rest of the domestics, whether in large buildings or in bungalows. Usually a dark tin shed is provided for them in a corner of the garden, where they live with their own families. An unused motor-garage sometimes serves the purpose of accommodating the Mali's family.

The quarters provided for the domestic servants, other than the gardeners are generally meant for the exclusive use of the servants only and not for their families. However, in some instances, we do come across domestic servants living with their families in the servants' quarters. This is possible only where more than one room is kept apart for the servants in the employer's household, or where there is only one resident servant, others being non-resident ones in a given household. Thus we

have in our sample 4 Christian and 6 Gujarati men servants, and 4 Christian and 2 Marathi women servants who are provided accommodation along with their families in the servants' quarters. One case was noted where a Gujarati man servant and his family were housed in one room shared by other male servants also, the latter, however, vacating the room at night. The 7 Marathi men servants living with their families in the servants' quarters are all Malis.

That excessive overcrowding is not a feature of living in the servants' quarters is borne out by the fact that on an average there are only 3.2 persons among men, and 3.4 among women, living per room in these quarters. We find in table 16a that the largest number of rooms occupied by men domestics, 29.1 per

TABLE 16a  
THE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER ROOM LIVING  
IN SERVANTS' QUARTERS

*Men Domestics*

No. of Persons living per room	Total No. of Rooms Occupied				Percentage
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Total	
1	8	5	1	14	10.4
2	15	11	5	31	23.1
3	12	22	5	39	29.1
4	12	14	3	29	21.6
5	3	3	1	7	5.2
6	4	5	—	9	6.7
7	1	1	—	2	1.5
8	—	1	1	2	1.5
9	—	—	1	1	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100</b>

cent in all have 3 persons each. Rooms with 2 persons each are about 23.1 per cent, and those with 4 are 21.6 per cent. There is a significant number of rooms, 10.4 per cent in all, which are occupied by only one person each. Rooms having more than 6 persons each are a bare 3.7 per cent, and we do not come across a single room in the servants' quarters where more than 9 persons are living at a time.

The data for the accommodation of women in servants' quarters, shown in table 16b, being too scanty, as there are only 11 such rooms, nothing definite could be said. However, here, out of the 11 rooms in the servants' quarters, the largest number, 27.2 per cent have only 2 occupants each. 18.1 per cent of the rooms accommodate 4 persons each, while an equal number have only 1 person occupying each of them. Here we do not find a single room where more than 7 persons are housed.

TABLE 16b  
THE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER ROOM LIVING  
IN SERVANTS' QUARTERS

*Women Domestics*

No. of Persons living per room	Total No. of Rooms Occupied				Percentage
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Total	
1	1	—	1	2	18.1
2	2	—	1	3	27.2
3	1	—	—	1	9.1
4	2	—	—	2	18.1
5	1	—	—	1	9.1
6	—	—	1	1	9.1
7	1	—	—	1	9.1
Total	8	0	3	11	100

From the above observations we infer that the quarters provided for the servants in the city of Bombay are reasonably tolerable for accommodation. The figures show that there is not much overcrowding, and a few instances are cited where one full room is at the disposal of one person only in some households. Even where there is a little bit of overcrowding, and the servants lack privacy, the situation is often no worse than what is known in the homes of their less fortunate colleagues who are not accorded quarters in their employer's house. There is not much of the dirt and squalor which is a distinctive feature of the tenements occupied by non-resident servants, which we shall see presently. The rooms are kept clean in a certain measure, and there is none of the smoky, suffocating atmosphere found in badly-ventilated working class households, for the cooking in many instances is done by the servants in the kitchen of their employer's house, their own quarters being exempted from the necessity of cooking inconveniences.

Life for the domestics in the servants' quarters is none too dull indeed! The quarters belong to the servants themselves, and the employer rarely cares to put his foot in them, with the result he is hardly aware of what goes on in the quarters of his own servants. The domestics have their own friends and relatives visiting them, who are offered tea and soft-drinks, and sometimes also eatables from the pantry of the master without his knowledge. In the course of the investigation, even the smell of liquor in the servants' quarters did not go undetected once, and the servants themselves were found in a merry mood during quiet afternoon hours, while the mistress of the house was enjoying a nap in one of the more remote chambers. When these considerations are taken into account, it is possible to conclude, that, on the whole domestic servants are comparatively well-housed in the servants' quarters. Living in the servants' quarters is therefore generally preferred by the domestic servants for their greater comfort and better amenities than what they are accustomed to elsewhere. There is hardly any dissatisfaction among the servants about their housing conditions in the quarters provided for them, and most of them are thankful to their lot for being fortunate enough to secure such type of accommodation.

A word may be added about the use the servants' quarters

are sometimes put to in the city of Bombay. On some of the visits to these quarters, it was discovered, to the amazement of the investigator, that in a few of the so-called servants' quarters, meant originally for the exclusive use of the servants, were housed private families belonging to the better-off classes. The landlords in such instances, exploiting the situation created by the acute housing shortage in the city, were found to be demanding exorbitant rents from such tenants, for the use of servants' quarters, thereby depriving the servants of the employing family of their right to benefit by the accommodation provided in these quarters.<sup>3</sup>

Not all the employers' houses in the city, however, are provided with the facilities for the servants' quarters. A large number of them are ordinary flats with no separate rooms for the domestics, with the result that the servants employed in these households are housed inside the employers' own houses. The proportion of the servants not allotted quarters to those that are provided with such facilities, is given in table 17a for men domestics in our sample. Here we find that 36.2 per cent of resident domestic servants do not have quarters of their own. Reading the table community-wise, it is among the Marathis that we find the largest number of persons, 76.4 per cent in all, that are not given living quarters at the place of service, whereas, among the Gujaratis there are only 10.1 per cent of such persons. Among the Christians, about 20.3 per cent of the domestics are not housed in servants' quarters. These figures, may not, however, be a faithful representation of the actual living conditions of the resident domestic servants, for the figures are slightly weighted, on the whole, in favour of those servants who are accorded servants' quarters, because of the greater difficulty involved in interviewing, in the absence of their employers, servants not having separate quarters to live in. In reality, however, the houses of the employers not provided with servants' quarters far outnumber those that do have such facilities. No statistics are available regarding this.

3. A young couple in the Colaba area living in one such servants' room reported that they were paying a monthly rent of Rs. 100 for the use of that small, none too congenial room which was originally used by domestic servants.

TABLE 17a

NUMBER OF PERSONS ALLOTTED SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
AT PLACE OF SERVICE

*Men Domestic*

	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
No. of persons allotted quarters at place of service	55	79.7	62	89.9	17	23.6	134	63.8
No. of persons not allotted quarters at place of service	14	20.3	7	10.1	55	76.4	76	36.2
Total	69	100	69	100	72	100	210	100

In table 17b for women servants, we find that about 82.8 per cent of the individuals have no separate rooms at the place of service. Among the Christians there are 86.2 per cent of such individuals; whereas, the data for the Marathi women are too scanty in this connection, there being only 6 women who are resident servants, of whom 3 are housed in servants' quarters, and 3 are not.

The domestic servants that are not provided with separate living quarters at the place of service and who have to put up with the employer's family can hardly have a moment to themselves except when they go out. They can practically have no

privacy for themselves, for there is not a room where they can retire when the work is done. The employer's kitchen is perhaps the only place that they can call their living-room. A corner of the kitchen also serves the purpose, in some cases, for the bedroom at night. The male servants especially, for want of space inside, have to spread out their beddings and sleep in the passages outside the house, and sometimes even in the corners of staircases. It so happens, that, sometimes even female servants are obliged to sleep in outer passages and this sort of a mixed sleeping arrangement for the servants is rather a matter of grave danger to young female servants. Such a state of affairs in many houses reflects badly on the negligence and unreasonableness of the employers.

TABLE 17b

NUMBER OF PERSONS ALLOTTED SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
AT PLACE OF SERVICE

	<i>Women Domestics</i>					
	Christians		Marathis		Total	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
No. of persons allotted quarters at place of service	8	13.8	3	50	11	17.2
No. of persons not allotted quarters at place of service	50	86.2	3	50	53	82.8
Total	58	100	6	100	64	100

An unusual feature of sleeping arrangement among some Marathi men domestic servants was discovered in the Dadar area. There is a small primary school in the Hindu colony on the premises of which about 30 to 40 Marathi servants from the surrounding locality come to sleep at night, not having proper sleeping amenities at the place where they work. The school serves them two purposes. Firstly, it serves them as a sort of a small social club where they conduct their 'bhajan mandlis' and exchange gossip before retiring to bed, and then it serves as a dormitory where they sleep after their social activities are over. Whether the school authorities themselves permit such use of their premises, or whether they are not cognisant of the fact, we do not know; but it was reported by about 12 individuals in our sample who are availing themselves of this particular facility.

This peculiar arrangement speaks of the inconveniences the resident domestic servants have to put up with, when they are not provided with separate quarters at the place of service, so that they sometimes resort to places outside their employers' households even though they may be, for all practical purposes, full-time resident domestic servants.

So far we have touched the housing<sup>\*</sup> conditions of only those servants who reside at the place of occupation. A large group of servants, about 45.2 per cent in our sample, of whom 39.2 per cent are women, and 6 per cent men, who are independent workers, not staying in the households of their employers, still remain to be explored as regards their housing conditions. The conditions here will be at great variance from what we have seen so far, for the houses of non-resident domestic servants form part of the working class dwellings of the city and they consequently bear the stamp of working class households. Therefore, whatever problem of housing there exists for the labouring population in general, which dwells under conditions dangerous to health, safety and morality, exists in the same measure for the independent domestic workers too. Accordingly, a survey was made of some of the working class dwellings which offer regular supply of domestic labour (especially female domestic labour) to the various localities of the city mentioned in a previous chapter. For example, the Matunga Labour Camp and the chawls at Vadala and Naigaum which supply domestic servants



to the Dadar, Matunga and Sion areas, a Mang chawl at Mahim, the Old and New Jaifalwadi and Bania's chawls which supply domestics to the localities of Grant Road, Tardeo, and Warden Road, Chandanwadi and other privately owned chawls from where the residents of Girgaum, Dhobi Talao, and Queen's Road obtain their daily domestic workers, and lastly a Christian chawl at Colaba were surveyed for this purpose. No doubt one cannot expect a uniformity of housing conditions when the localities selected are so distant and different from one another. But then, at the same time one cannot fail to take note of certain facts and features so characteristic of labouring class habitations designed for the most intensive exploitation of the available dwelling area, having for their object the housing, or rather "ware-housing" as Burnett-Hurst calls it,<sup>4</sup> of large numbers of people in as cheap a manner as possible with little regard to their health and comfort.

It would, however, be of interest first to describe individually the general structure of each of the above mentioned tenements in different localities in which some of our non-resident domestic workers are housed.

Starting from the north we take the Matunga Labour Camp which constitutes a vast and sprawling area with several hundreds of tenements on the west of the Central Railway lines. It is specially constructed by the Bombay Municipality for the purpose of housing labour, especially from the Marthi-speaking scheduled castes. The Camp is composed of strong tin-hutments of a permanent character, joined to one another, and arranged in rows one behind the other, each hutment in each row being given a special tenement number. The space between each row of hutments is stone-paved except in a few places. Each hutment has only one room with a small space partitioned for cooking purposes and a small verandah. Inside the room it is rather dark, for there is only one small window in the space provided for cooking. The tenements, of course, have no electric lights inside, but electric lamp-posts are erected at certain intervals on the paved walks outside. There are no individual water-taps and no space provided for bathing inside the house. Water-taps for washing,

4. Burnett—Hurst: *Labour And Housing In Bombay*, 1925, p. 20.

bath-rooms and privies are provided outside the hutments, at a little distance away, for the common use between several families. The monthly rent in the camp varies from Rs. 10 to 15. The Matunga Labour Camp is an interesting feature of living for the labouring classes of north Bombay, which has its own small shops, a little temple, a primary school, and a co-operative society.

The privately owned chawls at Naigaum, Vadala and Mahim inhabited by the Marathi and the Gujarati scheduled castes are of a much poorer standard than those at Matunga. They are composed of tin-hutments arranged in rows facing and backing each other, in a sorry state of dilapidation. The space between the two rows is narrow and not stone-paved, with the result, it becomes one big pool of mud in the rainy season. There are no windows in these hutments, and so the entrance door is the only source of light and air. There are no electric lights nor private water-taps, but in some cases, bathing spaces called 'nahanis' are provided inside the hutment. The living conditions in these hutment-chawls are simply deplorable. The rent paid for each tenement varies from Rs. 8 to 10 per month.

The Old Jaifalwadi chawl at Tardco, inhabited by the Gujarati-speaking scheduled caste labourers bears a very close resemblance to the conditions described above at Mahim and Vadala, being similarly composed of tin-hutments.

The New Jaifalwadi, however, is a much smaller and healthier place in comparison. Situated on a higher level at Forjett Hill, the tenements are not tin-hutments, but more solid structures of brick, for which a rent varying from Rs. 14 to 16 is paid by the tenants.

The Bania's Chawl at Grant Road, inhabited by a mixed population of Gujarati, Marathi and Christian labourers, comprises a bigger area. This is also composed of small, one-room brick structures, joined to one another and arranged in rows. The space between the houses is stone-paved. The rooms over here are better lighted and ventilated, each one having a large window in addition to the entrance door, though of course there are no electric lights or private watertaps here as elsewhere.

The Municipal Chawls for the Gujarati-speaking labourers

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at Chandanwadi and other privately owned ones at Dhobi Talao, differ from all others seen so far, in that they are two and three storeyed buildings unlike the ground-floor one-room tin and brick structures just described. Here, there are rows of one-room tenements facing each other, separated by a central corridor running across the whole length of the building. Attached to each room is a small space for the kitchen on the verandah side of the building. The entrance to each room is through the corridor which is dark and narrow. The rooms have only one small window in the kitchen, and therefore, it is usually dark and stuffy inside. There are no taps, but a set of sanitary conveniences is provided on each floor. On each floor also, there are separate washing places for men and women for the common use of all the families. In the Municipal as well as the privately-owned chawls at Dhobi Talao, however, electric lights were noticed. The rent paid by the tenants in these chawls varies from Rs. 10 to 15 per month.

The Christian chawls at Colaba, where a large number of domestic servants dwell, and where rents in some cases are paid by their employers, bear a slight resemblance to those at Dhobi Talao. They too are two to three storeyed buildings, but the rooms arranged in rows do not face or back each other, with the result, there is through ventilation over there. A common open verandah runs along the whole length of the chawl, and the rooms themselves have one large window each. The atmosphere in these chawls is not dark and suffocating as is felt in places seen before. The rooms are each fitted with electric lights, but the taps and privies are used by the tenants in common. There is, however, a small bathing place inside the rooms, but no provision is kept for the kitchen.

So far we have sketched in brief out-line, only the general structure of some of the houses of domestic servants visited during the course of the survey. The actual conditions of housing and their repercussions on the living of the lower class workers prevailing in these houses, still remain to be seen. "The housing of the workers, writes Sayle, "in a working class district presents problems which do not arise elsewhere".<sup>5</sup> We note that the non-resident domestic workers in our sample have to be content with

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5. A. Sayle : *The Houses Of The Workers*, London, 1924, p. 22.

old and most inconvenient working class houses in the city which are either tin-hutments or chawls which are buildings let in separate tenements. The houses, even if a few of them may not be structurally bad, suffer invariably from very many drawbacks, and since housing is one of the main factors conditioning work and living, it is essential that we point out, at some length, some of the prominent defects of these houses and the effects of bad housing on human living.

The distinguishing features of the chawls and hutments in which the domestic servants are housed are cheerlessness and monotony of outlook, and the more or less complete lack of hygienic conditions. The surroundings of many tenements are extremely dirty, the space between the houses being littered with garbage. A foul smell usually pervades the whole atmosphere, often making the work of the investigator, not accustomed to such surroundings, extremely difficult, and forcing the occupants of the houses in some cases to keep their one and only window closed. Every inch of space is occupied, for the rooms being not sufficient for the purpose of several persons dumped into them, people are forced to make use of the corridors and gangways between the houses, cramping them with beddings, boxes and clothes — a phenomenon universally observed whether in the Labour Camp at Matunga, or in the more solidly built chawls at Dhobi Talao. For creating more floor space within the room, lofts are often erected half-way up the ceiling, which are either utilized for storing the belongings, or are sub-let to other tenants. This creates an atmosphere of greater congestion, by reducing the height of the room.

The occupants invariably suffer great inconveniences arising from a total lack of some of the amenities in their rooms. As observed above, none of the tenements is fitted with private taps, and privies for each family separately. In all cases, the tenants have to share in common the limited number of such sanitary conveniences provided outside their rooms, with the result, the water-tap is a scene of many an occasional scuffle during the rush hours in the morning. Regarding this common use of water-taps and closets, Mackintosh acidly remarks, "A water-closet shared by several families is not a service. It is an insult. A single tap shared by several families is one hypocritical stage better than the well

and the bucket".<sup>6</sup> No doubt the continued use of privies and washing places by several families offers a serious risk to health and are a cause for the spread of various infectious diseases. Under such conditions the inhabitants could hardly be expected to make any beginning of education in sanitation, and it would not but follow that persons living in an insanitary surrounding become rapidly accustomed to an insanitary environment. No doubt, part of the insanitary conditions may be attributed to the habits and total ignorance of the inhabitants themselves, and they do require to be taught the elements of hygiene.

In the interior, the houses are not as unclean and filthy as their surroundings. Although the individuals in our sample are all residents of one-room tenements without exception, it is surprising to observe the degree of cleanliness maintained by atleast some of them in their homes. In that one room which is their lot, they cook, eat, sleep and carry on all their household activities; yet things are well arranged in their respective corners. There is hardly more than one bed and that too is a luxury. Sometimes a chair or two, especially in Christian and Gujarati houses in private chawls, are to be noted. Cupboards are practically unknown except in some Christian quarters. The cooking equipment takes up about one-quarter of the room where kitchen space is not provided. Great care is taken by the Maharashtrian and the Gujarati housewives to keep their cooking utensils sparkling clean, a feature observed in almost every household. The walls, of course, are invariably decorated with rows and rows of pictures of saints and gods who are worshipped everyday. In Christian houses a small altar is fixed to a wall with pictures of Christ and Mary where incense and candles are burnt everyday. This is a mark of the deep faith so characteristic of our poor working classes.

The atmosphere inside the rooms, however, is not conducive to healthful living. Since cooking is generally done inside the room, except where kitchen space is provided, the walls are smoke-stained. As there is only one window, and sometimes none, as was noted in several tin-hutments, the ventilation, in most cases, is exceedingly poor and the rooms dark, and suffocating.

6. Mackintosh J. M. : op. cit. p. 14.

Pure air and light are two of the important essentials of good housing, and an absence, or inadequacy of these decreases efficiency, produces a sense of discomfort, and causes psychological depression.

The conditions of unhealthy living in these houses, which cause disease and discomfort are further aggravated by gross overcrowding that occurs in them. Overcrowding is a fairly accurate measure of housing conditions in general. A common impression that one gathers in surveying these houses is that too many people are housed in much too little floor-space and the tenements are too crowded together. Overcrowding is one of the manifestations of poverty. It is largely due to an inability to pay more rent for more rooms. Hence the phenomenon of a comparatively large number of human beings *cribbed, cabined and confined* in one room having an area of only 100 to 125 square feet. The average number of persons per room in quarters occupied by men domestics is 6.3 whereas, in those of women domestics is 7.3 This is very large compared to the average number of 4.01 persons per room in one-room tenements in Bombay city as recorded in the Census of 1931.<sup>7</sup> The servants' quarters seen above stand favourably in comparison. There, as is evident from tables 18a and 18b, there are 3.2 persons per room among men servants compared to

TABLE 18a

COMPARATIVE ROOM OCCUPANCY IN SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
AND PRIVATE QUARTERS

Community	<i>Men Domestics</i>	
	Average No. of persons per room in Servant's quarters	Average No. of persons per room in Private quarters
Christians	3.05	6
Gujeratis	3.03	5.9
Marathis	3.5	7.2
Total	3.2	6.3

7. Census Of India 1931 : Cities Of The Bombay Presidency. p. 86.

TABLE 18b

COMPARATIVE ROOM OCCUPANCY IN SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
AND PRIVATE QUARTERS*Women Domestic*

Community	Average No. of persons per room in Servant's quarters	Average No. of persons per room in Private quarters
Christians	3.5	4.2
Gujeratis	0	7.6
Marathis	3	7.3
Total	3.4	7.3

6.3 per room in chawls; and 3.4 persons per room among women servants in servants' quarters, as against 7.3 per room in chawls. This is also true for all the communities taken separately. This fact is sufficient to show that living conditions in the chawls for non-resident domestic servants are deplorable compared to those for resident domestic servants in servants' quarters.

Table 19a is designed to show the pressure of persons upon room-space among men domestics living in private quarters.<sup>8</sup> Here we find that the largest number of rooms, 20.6 per cent are occupied by 5 persons each and the second largest number, 13.8 per cent are occupied by 4, 6, 7 and 8 persons each. There are also 2 rooms having 12 and 15 persons each, respectively.

The table 19b for non-resident women servants gives a better index of overcrowding, for the sample here is much larger than that for men. Here, the largest number of rooms, 16.4 per cent in all, contain 7 persons each, and 13.1 per cent, 5 persons each. A significant number of rooms, 15.4 per cent of the total, are occupied by 11 to 16 persons each. One thing that strikes us

8. Since some of the domestic servants, residing in servants' quarters have their families in Bombay living in chawls, the conditions prevailing in their houses are included in this table.

TABLE 19a  
THE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER ROOM LIVING IN  
PRIVATE QUARTERS

*Men Domestic*

No. of persons living per room	Total No. of Rooms Occupied				
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Total	Percentage
2	1	—	—	1	3.4
3	—	2	—	2	6.8
4	1	3	—	4	13.8
5	3	2	1	6	20.6
6	3	—	1	4	13.8
7	1	1	2	4	13.8
8	1	—	3	4	13.8
9	—	1	1	2	6.8
12	1	—	—	1	3.4
15	—	1	—	1	3.4
Total	11	10	8	29	100

in the table is that among the rooms occupied by the Christian women there are none having more than 7 members each. The overcrowding is very heavy among the quarters of the Gujeratis and the Marathis. The sample for the Christians is, no doubt, very small compared to that of the other two communities, but the comparatively smaller incidence of overcrowding in this community may be due to the slightly better living conditions in the Christian chawls.

A further idea of overcrowding in one-room tenements occupied by non-resident domestic servants is obtained from the table giving details of tenements containing more than one family.



TABLE 19b  
THE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER ROOM LIVING IN  
PRIVATE QUARTERS

*Women Domestics*

No. of persons living per room	Total No. of Rooms Occupied				
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Total	Percentage
2	3	1	4	8	4.1
3	—	5	6	11	5.6
4	2	7	6	15	7.7
5	2	10	13	25	13.1
6	1	6	15	22	11.3
7	3	12	17	32	16.4
8	—	6	15	21	10.8
9	—	7	12	19	9.8
10	—	6	6	12	6.2
11	—	5	2	7	3.6
12	—	3	5	8	4.1
13	—	2	1	3	1.5
14	—	3	2	5	2.5
15	—	1	4	5	2.5
16	—	1	—	1	1.2
TOTAL	11	75	108	194	100

We see from the table 20a, that out of a total number of 26 rooms occupied by men servants, 76.8 per cent contain one family each, and 23.2 contain 2 families each. The rooms inhabited by Marathis show a greater incidence of two families per room, there being 42.9 per cent of such rooms. Among the Christians, however, there are only 9.1 per cent of the one-room tenements housing two families. But this sample for men domestics

TABLE 20a  
THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES PER ROOM LIVING IN  
PRIVATE QUARTERS

*Men Domestic*

No. of families living per room	Total No. of Rooms Occupied							
	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
1 family	10	90.9	6	75	4	57.1	20	76.8
2 families	1	9.1	2	25	3	42.9	6	23.2
3 families	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	11	100	8	100	7	100	26	100

being very small, we cannot say whether it truly represents actual conditions.

As for the tenements occupied by the families of women servants, which are 194 in our sample, we see in table 20b that, as many as 34.5 per cent of the rooms contain two families each. There are even 2 rooms with 3 families. Here again, the largest number of rooms, 39.8 per cent, containing 2 families are occupied by the Marathis, and the smallest number, 18.2 per cent, housing 2 families, by the Christians. There is no room among the latter having 3 families, the 2 such rooms that are there in the sample, being occupied by the Gujaratis and the Marathis.

The table represents an index of excessive overcrowding in the one-room tenements. "The conditions in which more than one family occupy only one room", writes the Census Superintendent of Bombay Presidency, 1931, "must be counted a disgrace to any civilized community".<sup>9</sup>

Disgrace or no disgrace, the spectacle is there before our eyes, of human beings dumped together in small, dark, dingy

9. Census of India, 1931, 'The Cities of The Bombay Presidency', p. 91.

TABLE 20b  
THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES PER ROOM LIVING IN  
PRIVATE QUARTERS

*Women Domestic*

No. of families living per room	Total No. of Rooms Occupied							
	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
1 family	9	81.8	52	69.3	64	59.3	125	64.4
2 families	2	18.2	22	29.3	43	39.8	67	34.5
3 families	—	—	1	1.4	1	.9	2	1.1
Total	11	100	75	100	108	100	194	100

rooms, without consideration for human discomfort, dirt, disease and degradation. Many a time the most obnoxious phenomenon of families thrown on the small verandahs of tenements, called "osris" by the people, was observed. And we have 18 families of the domestic servants in our sample having only such an "osri" as their sole shelter, the main tenement being occupied by other one or two families. These so-called "sub-tenants" have to pay exactly half the rent of the original room. The extent of overcrowding is only left to be imagined under such conditions.

That overcrowding as such — the huddling together of human beings in a confined space — produces adverse effects on health is not a little known fact. It is harmful both physically and psychologically. Mrs. Alva Myrdal describes the situation thus: "Generally the inevitable close relationship in small and great things alike, in conflicts, quarrels and love... in dressing and cooking, in sleep and work, is a strain on all. The joy in family life is difficult to sense when privacy can never alternate with being together... All must be shared by all; every thing happening is experienced by everyone".<sup>10</sup>

10. Mrs. Alva Myrdal: *Nation And Family*, New York, 1941.

Overcrowding has bad effects on sleep also which lessens efficiency. It hinders the activities of the young and the old. The children have no play spaces and repressed play thwarts development. They can have only the 'Street for a play-ground and a wretched tenement for a home'. Moreover, there are constant hindrances to education within a crowded home for the school-going child.

Overcrowding in the home is also influential in producing sexual irregularity as is generally recognised. "The inevitable lack of space and privacy makes it extremely difficult to preserve normal standards of decency", writes Mackintosh, "children develop a pre-mature acquaintance and an unhealthy pre-occupation with sexual matters".<sup>11</sup> Thus when families are huddled together in too close a contact, there is every possibility of getting poor standards of conduct both social and sexual. "Overcrowding", as pointed out by Bryce, "is almost as incompatible with good manners as with good morals".<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, in addition to this, overcrowding is known to be greatly responsible for increasing death-rates, especially of young children. Can we not attribute then, the high infant mortality rate of 375.5 per 1000, among the children of the individuals in our whole sample to the unhealthy and congested conditions of living of so many of our domestic servants?

The above sketch of the housing conditions leads us to infer that the housing of our non-resident domestic servants is on the whole extremely poor. It lacks many of the amenities of life and is fraught with hazards both to physical and mental health of the individuals concerned. Unhappiness, discontent, and resentment among these people are largely due to unsatisfactory living conditions. Bad housing, poverty and squalor reduce morale and efficiency among the workers. It would be ridiculous to expect in such houses the conditions that go in the making of a home as a place for comfort, health, relaxation and enjoyment. The atmosphere prevailing within them is largely one of worry and irritation caused by overcrowding and lack of privacy, which, in turn, leaves hardly any room for the development of normal family

11. Mackintosh J. M. op. cit. p. 112.

12. Bryce: *The Menace Of Great Cities*, 1913, p. 5.

relationships. In other words, several of our domestic workers are housed in some of the poorest slums of the city, which are groups of dwellings characterized by overcrowding and bad structural and sanitary conditions, unsafe for public welfare — *areas hardly fit for human habitation!*

A general discontent and sense of injustice, no doubt prevails among the occupants, but they are largely apathetic and have little experience and knowledge of how to improve matters; this is combined with indifference and impatience towards such discontent on the part of the landlords and individuals of the well-to-do classes. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that the investigator, on several rounds of survey was flooded with questions by the interviewees, whether the purpose of this survey was for the improvement of their existing housing conditions or for the provision of new houses for them. It was even requested by some of the domestic workers that the matter be brought to light and that pressure should be put upon the private landlords by higher authorities to bring about the necessary improvements. This alone indicates that, while on the one hand, the workers accept as inevitable the prevailing conditions, on the other hand, they are very much alive to the fact that they are a neglected class and have a right to decent accommodation.

While discussing the housing conditions of the non-resident domestic servants mention must be made of a small group of individuals who are residents of communal clubs. They number only 13 in all, and constitute about 2.6 percent of the individuals of our sample. All of them are Christian with one exception who is a Gujarati man domestic. Since living in residential clubs is a feature common mostly among the Christians in our survey, we shall briefly dwell upon only the conditions as were observed in the Christian clubs.

The largest number of Christian clubs in Bombay are Goan clubs, but those of Mangalore, Sawantwadi and other places round about, also constitute a fairly large number. The clubs are of three types; men's clubs, women's clubs and mixed clubs for families, the last, however, being fewer in number. Unlike the quarters of other domestic servants, they are not located in municipal or private chawls, but in slightly better, lower middle-class residential areas in private buildings, strewn all over Dhobi Talao,

Cheera Bazaar, Byculla, Grant Road and Mazagaon areas. Sometimes a whole building is used up by several clubs, or even by one club, while very often the clubs are scattered in houses, parts of which are occupied by other tenants, who do not necessarily belong to the working classes. The club premises, however, are often in a state of bad repair.

The clubs are given individual names after the patrons of the clubs or after the Christian Saints. Each club has a certain set of rules of conduct to maintain peace and order according to which the members are supposed to act.

The men's clubs are run on a democratic basis with a manager and a body of members elected by the club members themselves to look after the details of the club. Whereas, unlike the men's clubs, the women's clubs are run on profit-making basis by an individual land-lady called "Ghorwalli" whose word is law.

The club dwelling usually consists of one large room called the club hall, the size of which varies in different buildings, and a kitchen. The club hall is the centre of club life. It is the parlour, the dining-room, the recreation-room, the study-room, the meeting hall and also the bed-room, in one. There is an altar in the centre of the room where the members gather every day for prayer. Some very large clubs sometimes have several rooms for housing a large membership. Between the kitchen and the living-room is a big passage often approached by a narrow, dark, rickety stair-case. Unlike the one-room tenements of the working classes, the living-room has two or three windows and sometimes even a small open balcony. Therefore, the room is not so dark and suffocating as seen elsewhere. Besides, electric lights are invariably provided in them, and the sanitary conditions prevailing in them are not wholly unsatisfactory.

This is a total lack of furniture inside the room except for an occasional table or a wooden bench. One characteristic feature of these clubs observed everywhere, is the arrangement in rows, of trunks and boxes containing the belongings of the occupants, along the four walls. These trunks and boxes kept side by side serve both as chairs during the day, and as beds during the night with the beddings spread over them for sleeping purposes. As cooking is not done in the living-room, the walls and the floor

are in a better condition than in other working class quarters, and the surroundings too are not so dirty and unkempt. The club premises are kept clean by the members in turn every day, and once a month all the members join hands to clean and wash down the whole place even using disinfectants. Messing arrangements are usually found in large men's clubs. But members desirous of cooking their own meals are provided facilities to cook in turns. Only large clubs have a cook and a sweeper. In women's clubs, all the persons do their own cooking in turns separately, for, cooking is not done on community-basis. The kitchen, of-course is rather dark and unclean as might be expected when used by several people at a time.

The atmosphere inside the club is kept lively by the members by playing indoor games or musical instruments like the violin. Some members also possess gramophones of their own, and records are played during afternoon hours, and even till late hours in the evening.

The membership in Christian clubs usually varies from 20 — 50 persons, but clubs with 400 and 500 members were also reported though we did not come across any. But all the members do not reside on the club premises at one and the same time. Most of them are away at their respective places of occupation and only a few, who are either sick, unemployed, or who have no provision for accommodation at place of occupation, put up at the club. That is why it is not usual to find more than 15 to 20 persons at a time in a club. However, to guard the secret of the place, the members could not give the exact number of persons housed in the club and it was not possible for the investigator to count them, for all the occupants were not present at the time of enquiry. Usually about 15 to 20 persons were observed. This does constitute overcrowding no doubt, but the rooms being comparatively large, and there being no furniture or cooking equipment in them, the sleeping arrangements are slightly better than were noted in the chawls.

Mostly the clubs provide accommodation for singleton individuals, (their families living elsewhere), but women members are sometimes accompanied by one or two children. There are some clubs where whole families of men, women and children are housed in a single club, and that is only when the room is very

large and has additional one or two adjoining small rooms. In this case each family is allotted a small space in the room where they eat, sleep and carry on all their other activities. Where 10 to 15 families are thus housed in one place, privacy, of course, is an unknown factor, and congestion is also too great, for, sometimes as many as 30 to 35 persons sleep in one room. Deterioration of morals in mixed and overcrowded clubs is naturally to be expected. It was also learnt from hearsay evidence that girls when unemployed are sometimes used for vile purposes for the payment of money by the land-ladies. Rent in women's clubs is Rs. 2 per head per month, and in mixed clubs it ranges from Rs. 12 to 15 for married couples and extra rent is charged per each grown-up child.

Outsiders are looked upon with suspicion, and it becomes a very difficult task for the investigator to first gain admission on the premises and then elicit detailed information about the members therein who happen to be domestic servants. The owner, or the manager is usually a none too courteous person and tact is sometimes required to get him round. The members themselves live in a sort of dread of the manager, for their activities are generally under his supervision.

The Christian residential clubs called "Coors" by the people, which are of a spontaneous, natural emergence to meet the needs of the community, are a fine phenomenon of community-living. On their arrival in Bombay from their villages in Goa and elsewhere, in search of employment, the poorer members of the Christian community seek resort in these clubs which offer them a place for accommodation, and inculcate in them a sense of belongingness to their own village-community, in the city. The members thus do not feel lonely and lost in a city with which they are little acquainted, in the beginning. The clubs with a few exceptions, thus serve a useful purpose of preventing the social and moral disintegration of the individual torn from home surroundings, by providing a home. For a nominal rent varying from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 3 per month, the members enjoy the security of club membership. The club indeed serves purposes other than mere provision for accommodation. It promotes unity and mutual assistance and maintains schemes of Provident and other Mutual benefits. The Death Benefit fund is common to all clubs and is



a characteristic of the Coor system. Part of the rent paid by the members is laid aside by the club authorities, of which detailed accounts are kept in account books, and when any member dies, funeral expenses are met by the club. Besides, all members contribute Re. 1 as "call-money" on the death of a member, which, along with the Death Benefit fund is paid to the wife and children of the dead man in the village. Even during periods of unemployment, the members are not left to starve, for, all the members sometimes get together and contribute what they can, towards the maintenance of the unemployed man, or the latter is given work on the club premises and is absolved from the payment of rent and food money as long as he is unemployed. Also, in times of illness, the sick individuals are adequately taken care of. The clubs sometimes give loans to members in times of financial difficulties like illness, unemployment, grave emergency and death in the family, with an average interest of Rs. 6 per annum. It is for these manifold reasons that many of the Christian domestic servants retain membership of their clubs by paying the monthly rent, and leaving their trunks and boxes therein as a mark of membership, even when they have secured a good job with accommodation, for the job is always of a temporary nature, while the club is more or less a permanent institution. Incidentally, it would be appropriate to mention here from the findings of Miss Olga Baptista that the domestic servants form the largest group, about 20 to 21 per cent among club members everywhere.<sup>13</sup> She also draws attention to a theory that the original founders of the Coor system in Bombay, along with sea-men were the Christian domestic servants, to meet the exigencies of their occupation. The Christian residential clubs, therefore, serve a very useful purpose for their community in Bombay.

An account of the living conditions of the domestic servants in the city of Bombay leads one to conclude that servants living at place of occupation are comparatively better housed than those living in their own private dwellings. The resident domestics are in some instances provided with servants' quarters which are on the whole not so unhealthy as the private quarters of non-resi-

13. Olga Esther Baptista: *The "Coor" System — A Study of Goan Club-Life in Bombay*, 1953. Unpublished M.A. Thesis of the Bombay University, p. 123.

dent servants, which are none other than chawls and tin-hutments where prevails the atmosphere of the slums. Overcrowding which is a marked feature of the housing in chawls is found in a much lesser degree in the servants' quarters where sometimes, even one whole room is allotted to one individual, a fact unknown in the quarters of non-resident domestics. Also, the resident domestic servants are exempted from paying rent for their quarters, whereas, their less fortunate bretheren are burdened with rents varying from Rs. 6 to 16 per month, a pretty good sum indeed to be paid out of their small family earnings! The problems of housing, therefore, with which the latter are confronted, do not arise for those servants provided accommodation at place of service. Only in some Christian houses does one come across some cheer and less overcrowding and a slightly better standard of housing than in the more dull, dark, congested and uncomfortable houses occupied by the Gujerati and the Marathi domestic servants. It is for these reasons then, that some non-resident domestics have reported that they prefer working hours spent in the houses of their employers, to hours spent in their own incongenial homes and surroundings!

We have surveyed so far the marital conditions and the family structure and relationships of the domestic servants. We have also seen how the domestic servants are housed in the city. We next proceed to study them in the context of their working conditions and determine how far domestic service as an occupation enables the individuals engaged in it to live a satisfactory life both economically and socially, in the succeeding chapters.

## CHAPTER VI

### WAGES, HOURS, AND CONDITIONS OF WORK IN DOMESTIC SERVICE

DOMESTIC SERVICE in private households differs from all other industries and forms of wage-earning for working class men and women, in that it presents certain distinct characteristics of its own not found in any other trade or occupation. The chief point of its uniqueness lies in its total indefiniteness regarding wages, hours and conditions of work for the employees.

It is the one industry in fact the only big industry where the worker is employed by an individual employer on the premises of his own household, rather than by an employer, or even a group of employers in a large organization. Therefore, the factor making for uncertainty and indefiniteness of working conditions for the household worker is, the great variation from one place to another, and also from one house to another in the same place or community, according to the occupation, income and character of the employer.

Domestic service belongs to the category of non-productive occupations. The workers in private households are not employed for the purposes of carrying on a trade, and hence, for deriving profits out of their labour as is the case with factory and other industrial labourers, shop-assistants, and a large number of clerks in business concerns. "Domestic service", says C. V. Butler," is unique as a calling, because the personal considerations involved are so all-important, and because the employer of such labour does not hire it to produce goods for sale in a fiercely competitive market."<sup>1</sup> To borrow a phrase from economics, therefore, *domestic labour produces utilities, not commodities*. As a result of this essential character of domestic service the conditions of employ-

1. C. V. Butler: *Domestic Service*, London, 1916, pp. 11-12.

ment are found to be necessarily different from those in other occupations.

"Economic interests and conditions of work" are pointed out by several authors on Industrial Sociology, to be the ultimate goals of the working class.<sup>2</sup> Since the pattern of one's living is naturally shaped to a considerable extent, by the amount of wages one receives in return for work done, the worker, when seeking a job first tends to ask what the particular job will pay him, and whether it will pay him enough to meet the necessary cost of living. Now, a person entering domestic service in a private household, gets less well-defined answers in this respect than do those seeking jobs in factories, shops and offices. And, herein lies the obvious indefiniteness with regard to wages. Because work in a non-productive industry like domestic service is not possible to be measured directly by total output, it is difficult to fix and adapt wages. "... in domestic service the work done cannot be subjected to any comparative test, since it has the character, almost unique in wage-paid industry, of being carried on for use, not for profit, and the settlement of wages remains an individual bargain between employer and employed."<sup>3</sup>

Another element making for the uncertainty of the wages of the domestic worker lies in the fact that the "real" remuneration especially of the resident servant is paid in *kind* and not in cash. Therefore, the "real" wages of the servants are decidedly quite different from the nominal wages in money which are supplemented by amenities for board and lodging, which are more important for the servant's well-being. Since the quality of meals, and the facilities for accommodation accorded to resident domestic workers vary in different households, "it is very difficult to determine," as T. Caplow remarks, "a cash value for perquisites and payments in kind. The farmers and servants are usually paid in part by the provision of food and lodging, and often by clothing, medical service, and other incidentals."<sup>4</sup>

With these practical considerations regarding wages of domestic servants in mind, we take up first the question of the

2. Cf. Schneider: *Industrial Sociology*, New York, 1957, p. 339.

3. C. V. Butler op. cit., p. 42

4. Caplow T. *The Sociology of Work*, Minneapolis, 1954, p. 148.

average money-wage received by the workers in our sample. In table 21a we find that among men domestics, the average monthly wage is Rs. 44.1. Community-wise, it is the Gujaratis who receive the highest average wage of Rs. 55.03, whereas, the Marathis receive the lowest, Rs. 31.3. The Christians who stand between the Gujaratis and the Marathis, receive on an average Rs. 45.9 per month.

TABLE 21a  
AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME

Income	<i>Men Domestics</i>			
	Christians	Gujaratis	Marathis	All Communities
Total Rs. for all	3675	4403	2505	10583
Average Rs.	45.9	55.03	31.3	44.1

For women, as shown in table 21b, the average monthly wage is Rs. 26. Here it is the Christian women who receive the highest average of Rs. 32.7, whereas, the Marathis again are the lowest paid community, receiving Rs. 21.6 per month. The Gujarati women earn Rs. 26.3 on an average.

TABLE 21b  
AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME

Income	<i>Women Domestics</i>			
	Christians	Gujaratis	Marathis	All Communities
Total Rs. for all	2292	1978	2492	6762
Average Rs.	32.7	26.3	21.6	26

A better idea of the wages of domestic servants in Bombay could be had from the tables giving distribution of different scales of pay for the workers. In table 22a we notice that among

TABLE 22a  
DISTRIBUTION OF SERVANTS ACCORDING TO  
SCALES OF PAY

*Men Domestics*

Pay Scale in Rupees	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
5 — 10	1	1.2	—	—	5	6.2	6	2.5
11 — 15	—	—	—	—	8	10	8	3.3
16 — 20	6	7.5	2	2.5	17	21.4	25	10.4
21 — 25	6	7.5	5	6.2	10	12.5	21	8.7
26 — 30	13	16.3	13	16.3	16	20	42	17.4
31 — 35	5	6.2	2	2.5	2	2.5	9	3.7
36 — 40	9	11.3	8	10	4	5	21	8.7
41 — 45	6	7.5	2	2.5	2	2.5	10	4.2
46 — 50	12	15	7	8.7	4	5	23	9.6
51 — 55	4	5	3	3.8	2	2.5	9	3.7
56 — 60	4	5	7	8.7	6	7.5	17	7.1
61 — 65	3	3.8	5	6.2	2	2.5	10	4.2
66 — 70	1	1.2	7	8.7	—	—	8	3.3
71 — 75	1	1.2	5	6.2	—	—	6	2.5
76 — 80	5	6.2	8	10	1	1.2	14	5.8
81 — 90	2	2.5	2	2.5	—	—	4	1.6
91 — 100	—	—	3	3.8	1	1.2	4	1.6
101 — 125	2	2.5	—	—	—	—	2	.8
145	—	—	1	1.2	—	—	1	.4
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

men domestics, the largest number of workers, 17.4 per cent receive a wage ranging from Rs. 26 to 30 which is the popular rate. This is also true for the Christians and the Gujaratis; whereas, among the Marathis, the largest number, 21.4 per cent, receive a wage from Rs. 16 to 20. The table however shows a very wide range of variation in the pay scales of domestic workers, the lowest being Rs. 5 to 10 received by 5 Marathis and 1 Christian and the highest Rs. 145 received by a Gujarati house-keeper. The highest average income of the Gujaratis may be explained by the fact that in this community, a very significant proportion of individuals, about 38.6 per cent receive a wage of over Rs. 60 per month, whereas, only 17.4 per cent of such cases are to be found among the Christians; and among the Marathis, a still fewer number of individuals, only about 4.9 per cent in all, receive a wage of more than Rs. 60. The Marathis are the most poorly paid community as can be seen from the fact that about 70.1 per cent of the individuals receive less than Rs. 30 a month, while among the Christians and the Gujaratis there are only 32.5 and 25 per cent of individuals, who receive a wage lower than Rs. 30 per month.

Among women domestics as shown in table 22b the largest number, 20.4 per cent, have a monthly wage ranging from Rs. 21 to 25 which is lower than that for men. This is true for the Christians as well as for the Marathis, while among the Gujarati women, the largest number, 22.8 per cent, earn only Rs. 11 to 15 per month. Here also, as among men domestics, the pay scale ranges widely from Rs. 5 to 10 per month to over Rs. 100. A significant number of Marathi women, about 14 per cent earn only Rs. 5 to 10 in domestic work. Also we find that no Marathi woman domestic has an income of more than Rs. 45 per month, whereas, as many as 18.4 per cent Christian, and 16 per cent Gujarati women earn between Rs. 46 and Rs. 100 per month. But on the whole, as it is evident from the table, the general tendency for women household workers, is towards receiving a wage less than Rs. 30 a month, for as many as 76.9 per cent of the women in our sample receive this wage.

In estimating the wages of the domestic workers, it should be borne in mind that, apart from other considerations, hours of

work put in by different individuals vary considerably, and any variations in wages are definitely, to a very large extent, due to the wide variations in the number of hours worked. A better index of the average wage received by the different communities

TABLE 22b  
DISTRIBUTION OF SERVANTS ACCORDING TO  
SCALES OF PAY

*Women Domestics*

Pay Scale in Rupees	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
5 — 10	1	1.4	4	5.3	16	14	21	8.1
11 — 15	4	5.7	17	22.8	21	18.2	42	16.2
16 — 20	12	17.2	15	20	21	18.2	48	18.4
21 — 25	15	21.5	13	17.4	25	21.7	53	20.4
26 — 30	15	21.5	9	12	12	10.4	36	13.8
31 — 35	6	8.5	3	4	7	6.1	16	6.1
36 — 40	4	5.7	2	2.7	8	6.9	14	5.4
41 — 45	1	1.4	3	4	5	4.3	9	3.5
46 — 50	4	5.7	2	2.7	—	—	6	2.3
51 — 55	—	—	2	2.7	—	—	2	.8
56 — 60	5	7.1	1	1.3	—	—	6	2.3
61 — 70	1	1.4	3	4	—	—	4	1.5
71 — 80	1	1.4	1	1.3	—	—	2	.8
100 — 102	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.4
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100



can be had by computing the average monthly wage on the basis of one hour's work per day as is done in tables 23a and 23b.

We note from the table that among men domestics, it is again the Gujaratis who receive the highest average monthly wage of Rs. 4.1 for one hour's work a day, and the Marathis, the lowest wage of Rs. 2.8 per month. But the table for women reveals an interesting fact. The Christian women, who in table 21b were seen to be the highest paid community, in table 23b have turned out to be the lowest paid when calculating the monthly average wage-rate on the basis of one hour's work a day; whereas, it is the Gujaratis who receive the highest monthly average of Rs. 4.3 This may be taken to mean that although ap-

TABLE 23a

MONTHLY PAY RATE PER ONE HOUR A DAY FOR  
DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

*Men Domestics*

Monthly Rate of Pay per hour	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Average Rs.	3.5	4.1	2.8	3.5

TABLE 23b

MONTHLY PAY RATE PER ONE HOUR A DAY FOR  
DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

*Women Domestics*

Monthly Rate of Pay per hour	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Average Rs.	2.6	4.3	3.4	3.3

parently the Christian women are the highest paid, their high wages are offset by the longer hours of work as will be seen later, which bring down their monthly average wage-rate when calculated on an hourly basis.

As has been mentioned before, the one important factor affecting the wages of household workers is the remuneration paid in kind, which appreciably increases the actual income of many in the form of accommodation and board on the premises of the employer. It would be significant, therefore, to study the differences in incomes of resident and non-resident workers and of workers receiving meals at place of service and those not receiving such amenities.

In table 24a, out of 240 men employees, 216 are resident domestics and only 24 are non-resident. On the whole, the average monthly income of the resident workers is Rs. 43.1 which is less than Rs. 48.9, the average income of the non-resident servants. But community-wise, we find great variations. For instance, among the Gujeratis the pattern is reversed. Here it is the resident servants who receive a higher average wage of Rs. 56.3 per month rather than the non-resident servants whose average is Rs. 44.5. In the Christian community, we find a broader margin between the average wage of the non-resident domestics which is

TABLE 24a  
DIFFERENT AVERAGE INCOMES OF RESIDENT AND  
NON-RESIDENT SERVANTS

*Men Domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Average of All
Average income of 216 resident domestics.	Rs. 43.7	56.3	31.2	43.1
Average income of 24 non-resident domestics.	Rs. 61.3	44.5	32.0	48.9

Rs. 61.3, and that of the resident workers which is only Rs. 43.7 per month. It is among the Marathi servants that we find very slight difference in the wages of resident and non-resident workers, the former receiving an average of Rs. 31.2 and the latter, Rs. 32.0 per month.

As for the women domestics shown in table 24b it is the resident servants (70 out of 260), who receive a higher wage of Rs. 32.8, whereas, the non-resident workers earn a monthly average income of only Rs. 23.4. This is true for all the communities, except of course the Gujeratis among whom there are no resident workers.

From the above two tables we understand that there is no hard and fast rule that accommodation facilities provided in the employer's household, affect in either increasing or decreasing the money-wages of the domestic servants. For, as we have seen there are differences in the pattern both between men and women workers and between workers of different communities. It would be of interest to state here that from the findings of the Social Security Board on wages of a random sample of household workers registered with State employment offices in four leading cities of the United States, it was found that there was little difference, in general, in the wage-rates of those who lived in the

TABLE 24b  
DIFFERENT AVERAGE INCOMES OF RESIDENT AND  
NON-RESIDENT SERVANTS

*Women Domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Average of All
Average income of 70 resident domestics.	Rs. 33.5	—	26.6	32.8
Average income of 190 non-resident domestics.	Rs. 24.5	26.3	21.4	23.4

TABLE 25a

DIFFERENT AVERAGE INCOMES OF SERVANTS GIVEN MEALS  
AT PLACE OF SERVICE AND THOSE NOT GIVEN MEALS*Men Domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Average of All
Average monthly income of persons given meals at place of service	37.03	33.5	23.8	31.1
Average monthly income of persons not given meals at place of service	72.6	66.5	51.1	64.2

homes of their employers and those who lived out, and in a few instances wages were lower for those living out.<sup>5</sup>

Provision of two meals a day is an important item in the servant's well-being, substantially raising his or her "real" income. 60.8 per cent of the men domestics in our sample receive meals in their employers' households, the Christians, and the Marathis having a large number of persons, about 75 and 72.5 per cent respectively, receiving meals. The Gujeratis on the other hand have a large number of persons, about 65 per cent, who do not receive meals at the place of service. We observe from table 25a that on the whole the average income of persons offered meals is considerably lower than that of those not accorded such facilities, it being Rs. 31.1 per month of the former, compared to Rs. 64.2 of the latter. All the communities, however, conform to this pattern.

The over-all figures of the wages of women show a slight discrepancy. We have on the whole 23 per cent of the individuals receiving meals, whereas, as many as 77 per cent are "dry" wor-

5. *Hand Book on Women Workers*, U.S. Dept. of Labour, Women's Bureau, 1956.

TABLE 25b

DIFFERENT AVERAGE INCOMES OF SERVANTS GIVEN MEALS  
AT PLACE OF SERVICE AND THOSE NOT GIVEN MEALS*Women Domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	Average of All
Average monthly income of persons given meals at place of service	29.1	—	24.0	28.9
Average monthly income of persons not given meals at place of service	50.3	26.3	21.6	25.1

kers, to use the servants' own term. Among the Gujaratis we do not have any individuals having two meals at the place of service, and among Marathis there are only two such cases.<sup>6</sup> Here we find in table 25b that the average monthly wage of individuals given boarding amenities is Rs. 28.9 which is slightly higher than the average wage of Rs. 25.1 of those who are not. Scanning the table community-wise we find that this discrepancy is due to the higher wages of persons receiving meals in the Marathi community. But there being only two such individuals, we cannot generalize that among women servants the wages for those receiving meals at place of service are higher. For, among the Christians, we find that the wage-rate conforms to the general pattern, namely that the average wages of domestic servants receiving meals are decidedly lower than those of not receiving meals.

So far we have seen how the money-wages of domestic servants are affected by certain factors such as the number of hours worked, and the provision of board and lodging in the households

6. 2 Gujarati and 8 Marathi women receive one meal in the afternoons.

of the employers. There still remains to be considered another factor affecting the servants' wages and that is the actual occupation of the servant. Domestic service in private households involves a variety of certain distinct occupations based on the different types of functions performed by the servants in their different capacities, such as, (1) food preparation, which includes cooking, serving and cleaning of food; (2) cleaning, which includes dusting, sweeping, polishing, straightening, airing, washing, drying and so forth; (3) child-care and care of the invalids; (4) gardening; (5) and lastly personal attendance on the master or the mistress in the upper-class households. For this purpose we group the domestic servants on the basis of the different functions performed by them and study the average wages received by each sub-class among them. It might be mentioned here that this classification is made only for the men domestics in our sample, because among women the broad classifications of occupation are based more on community lines rather than within each community as such. For instance, the Gujarati and the Marathi women usually perform the task of daily cleaning the various items of the household, whereas, it is the chief function of the Christian "Ayahs" to look after the well-being of little children or sometimes even invalids, or to attend upon their mistresses. As for cleaning if at all they have to do, the tasks are usually light and few. Very rarely do we come across cooks among women domestic servants and there are none in our sample. Therefore, the average monthly wages of the women domestics on a community-basis being already discussed, we do not see the necessity of repeating the same.

Table 26 shows the different average monthly wages received by different types of men servants according to their designation based on the duties performed. We note from the table that the house-keepers receive the highest wage of Rs. 100 per month, but there being very few domestics belonging to this category, to be found only among the wealthiest classes, and only one of their kind in our sample, we do not have sufficient data for this group of household workers. The butlers who constitute 14.6 per cent of the men domestics, the largest number belonging to the Gujarati community, are the next highest-paid group, their average monthly wage being Rs. 67.6. The Malis, or gardeners, receive on an average Rs. 56.9 per month, but the indi-

viduals in our sample being very few, only 4.6 per cent in all, we cannot say that this figure faithfully represents the wages of the Malis in Bombay. On the whole, they may be a little less-paid than that. It should be added here that apart from doing outdoor work in the garden, this group of domestics are also sometimes required to do indoor cleaning work especially if the employer is

TABLE 26

AVERAGE INCOMES OF COOKS, BUTLERS, GENERAL HELPS, MALIS, ETC.

*Men Domestics*

Designation	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	No. of persons	Average income	No. of persons	Average income	No. of persons	Average income	No. of persons	Average income
Cooks	46	53.2	10	63.5	2	30.0	58	54.1
Cook and general helps	3	38.3	7	26.4	—	—	10	30.0
Butlers	6	56.6	27	69.5	2	75.0	35	67.6
General helps including bearers boys and hamals	24	31.4	34	46.4	65	25.7	123	32.5
Cook-mates	1	20	1	27	—	—	2	23.5
House-keepers	—	—	1	100	—	—	1	100
Malis	—	—	—	—	11	56.9	11	56.9
Total	80	45.9	80	55.03	80	31.3	240	44.1

the landlord of the building. We do have one such individual performing both the tasks, in our sample.

The cooks, who constitute 24.1 per cent of the total men servants, and supplied largely by the Christian community, as is seen in our table, are the next highest-paid group, their average monthly wage being Rs. 54.1. It is curious to note that those individuals who combine in themselves the duties of a cook and general help, are not so highly paid as those who are only cooks, for their average wage is only Rs. 30 per month. This may be partly explained by the fact that persons performing the function of a cook and general help both together are usually employed in the middle-class households where there are less well-defined categories of tasks performed by the different servants than in the upper-class households, and where the lower income of the employer affects the income of the servant. There is yet another class of workers in the kitchen, called cook-mates, found only in upper-class households, whose duty is more of the type of an apprentice helping the cook and at the same time learning from him the subtleties of the culinary art. We have, however, only two such persons in our sample, and their average pay amounts to only Rs. 23.5 per month.

The largest bulk of workers, about 51.2 per cent of the total, belong to the group of general helps who include among them boys, bearers, and hamals, and whose chief function consists in cleaning, washing and doing all odd jobs within the house as well as running errands for the housewife. Although the more arduous and unpleasant tasks of the household are performed by this group of workers, their average monthly wage is very low, it being only Rs. 32.5 as is seen in the table.

The above discussion on the wages of domestic servants in the city of Bombay makes it clear that domestic service is one of the lowest-paid occupations, where the largest number of employees receive a monthly wage much below Rs. 50, which is not at all sufficient to maintain an adequate standard of living for the workers concerned. It has rightly been pointed out by Elizabeth Benham, director of the United States Department of Labour, while discussing similar conditions in the U.S. that, "with the exception of agriculture, there need be little hesitation in putting household employment at the bottom of the list of



non-manufacturing employment on the basis of cash wages".<sup>7</sup> It is no doubt true that additional payments in the form of meals and accommodation provided do increase the actual income of many workers, but all of them do not receive such additions. Moreover, this type of payment in kind, even when it substantially raises real wages is beset with certain uncertainties, for it is not exchangeable to meet the other needs of the workers or even of their families, and it cannot be saved up for emergencies. A meal especially cannot always be considered a satisfactory method of remuneration, for the worker has no choice as to its quality and must accept it at all events. This brings out the inflexibility inherent in this form of wage payment.

The generally low cash-wage paid to the household workers, necessitating in many cases a sub-standard living for them and their families, along with the wide range in wages studied in the previous tables,<sup>8</sup> reflects a woeful lack of wage standards in relation to skill, experience and competence in the field of domestic service. This may be explained, as will be seen later, by the fact that domestic service is "*the unorganized industry or group of industries*",<sup>9</sup> as Butler puts it. "... One chief characteristic of domestic service is that the relationship of employer and employed is indefinite and unorganized".<sup>10</sup> It is the one very large occupation in which the wages have never been in any way affected by employee or employer combinations or by social legislation, at least in India. It but follows according to what Dr. Karl Pribram of International Labour Office has stated that, "Where workers and employers are not adequately organized, wages, like other conditions of work will still be determined by individual agreements between employers and workers; and should the conditions on the labour market leave the worker without the power of choice, it may very well happen that exceptionally low wages will remain the rule".<sup>11</sup>

7. Elizabeth Benham: 'The Woman Wage Earner', U.S. Dept. of Labour, *Women's Bureau, Bulletin* 172, 1939.

8. See tables 22a and 22b.

9. Butler C.V. op. cit. pp. 70-79. Italics are mine.

10. Ibid, p. 93.

11. Dr. Karl Pribram, Chief of the Statistical Section I.L.O. 'The Regulation of Minimum Wages As An Industrial Problem.' *International Labour Review* — Vol. 17, 1928.

The ignorance, exploitability, weakness and inexperience in the bargaining power of the domestic workers and the extremely personal relationships involved in domestic service constitute an obstacle to competitive bargaining, and allow the wages of this unorganized class of workers to fall to an unduly low level. In such circumstances, any desire on the part of some employers to pay reasonable wages is offset by the competition from less scrupulous individuals in the employer class, and also to a large extent, the effects of underpayment often tend to perpetuate the payment of low wages.

With this experience before us it would be amusing to read Sidney and Beatrice Webb according to whom the domestic servant has all the bargaining advantages on his or her side. "In the all-important matter of carrying out the bargain, it is the mistress, with her lack of knowledge, her indifference to details, and her preoccupation with other affairs, whose own ease of body and mind is at the mercy of the servant's hundred and one ways of making herself disagreeable".<sup>1</sup> This may be true of an atypical housewife in the city of London, for surely Indian housewives, save some exceptional cases, are not so indifferent to details of the household. And the housewife who is indifferent to the details of her own household, is apt to be more indifferent to the servant's well-being by way of payment of a high wage. Therefore, if at all the servants are better-paid than elsewhere, in some households, it seems quite likely that it is due to the employer's own high income, commonsense and generosity, rather than to any lack of knowledge or indifference on her part as the Webbs have made it out to be.

*Pecuniary and other Rewards in the form of Tips, Clothes and Bonus.*

In addition to wages, which is undoubtedly the basic form of compensation for services rendered, the domestic servants receive minor rewards, pecuniary or otherwise from some appreciative employers. These may be in the form of tips on festivals and other grand occasions, or an extra full or half pay, paid annually by way of a bonus, or new clothes and uniforms. It is of interest,

therefore, to determine to what extent these additional rewards help in supplementing the actual wages received by the servants.

In table 27a we see that the largest number of men domestics, 26.2 per cent receive only Rs. 2 to 5 a year in the form of tips, and 22.7 per cent receive about Rs. 5 to 10 in a year. 15.8 per cent receive no such additional payments at all. As for the rest they vary from Rs. 10 to Rs. 50 in a year. Four persons, of whom 2 are Christians and 2 Gujeratis, are fortunate enough to

TABLE 27a  
DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF TIPS RECEIVED PER YEAR  
BY SERVANTS

*Men Domestics*

Tips received per year		Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
		Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Rs.	2 --- 5	16	20	14	17.6	33	41.3	63	26.2
"	5 --- 10	16	20	24	30	15	18.8	55	22.9
"	10 --- 15	13	16.3	11	13.8	4	5	28	11.8
"	15 --- 20	6	7.5	7	8.8	--	--	13	5.4
"	20 --- 30	6	7.5	6	7.5	1	1.2	13	5.4
"	30 --- 40	1	1.2	1	1.2	--	--	2	.9
"	40 --- 50	1	1.2	-	--	-	--	1	.4
"	100	2	2.5	2	2.5	-	--	4	1.6
Full pay Bonus		3	3.8	6	7.5	1	1.2	10	4.2
No tips received		9	11.3	6	7.5	23	29	38	15.8
No experience due to new job		7	8.8	3	3.8	3	3.8	13	5.4
Total		80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

have their supplementary income amounting to Rs. 100 in the course of a year, while 10 persons, i.e., 4.2 per cent of the total receive one full additional pay every year in the form of a bonus. It should be remembered, however, that bonus paid by a master to his domestic servant is always by way of a mark of goodwill and gesture of sympathy to earn his contentment, and has nothing to do with the kind of bonus paid to industrial labourers which partakes the character of profit-sharing, for as we have said before, there is no profit motive in hiring domestic labour. 5.4 per cent of the individuals could not give definite answers as their jobs were new.

Among the women servants, as is shown in table 27b a very large number, 46.6 per cent, receive only about Rs. 2 to 5 a year

TABLE 27b  
DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF TIPS RECEIVED PER YEAR  
BY SERVANTS

<i>Women Domestics</i>									
Tips received per year		Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		Total	
		Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Rs.	2 — 5	23	33	44	59	54	47	121	46.6
„	5 — 10	24	34.5	13	17.4	10	8.7	47	18.1
„	10 — 15	3	4.3	3	4	4	3.5	10	3.8
„	15 — 20	2	2.8	—	—	1	.8	3	1.1
„	20 — 30	1	1.4	—	—	2	1.7	3	1.1
„	30 — 40	—	—	1	1.3	1	.8	2	.7
Half pay Bonus		1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.3
No tips received		14	20	7	9.6	31	27	52	20
No experience due to new job		2	2.8	7	9.6	12	10.4	21	8.1
Total		70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

in tips. The next largest group of individuals, i.e., about 20 per cent receive no tips at all, while a significant number, 18 per cent in all, get Rs. 5 to 10 during a year. The rest get such additional payments ranging from Rs. 10 to 40, but they are very few, being only about 6.7 per cent of the total. As for bonus to women servants, there are hardly any cases receiving it in our sample. There is only one Christian woman servant getting the benefit of an extra half pay in a year. 8.1 per cent of the women had no experience of receiving tips at the time of enquiry as they were new to their jobs.

That a large number of servants receive old worn-out clothes from their employers is a known fact. The question here is, how many of them are given new clothes by their masters, in one year? In our sample 17.3 per cent of the men domestics are recipients of new garments once or twice every year. The Gujaratis however, have the largest number of such cases, for there are as many as 25 per cent among them who are given new clothes. Of the total number of persons receiving clothes, 2.9 per cent are given servants' liveries by their employers, of whom 5 are Gujaratis and 2 Christians. The liveries in some cases have to be returned to the employer on quitting his services.

15.4 per cent of the women domestics receive new clothes once or twice a year. It is among the Christians that we have the largest number of individuals, as many as 38.5 per cent who receive such benefits. Instances of persons receiving clothes among the Gujarati and the Marathi women are negligible.

The above evidence points out that the domestic servants do not, on an average, add much to their remuneration in tips and other things. For when a great majority of them receive less than Rs. 10 in a year in tips, and a further significant number among them not even that, while a very small number, on the other hand, only 2.2 per cent, out of a total of 500 receive anything in the form of a full or halfpay bonus, it cannot be said that their wages on the whole are in any considerable extent increased by such small additions.

Secret commissions given to servants by shopkeepers in return for patronage of those who do purchasing for their employers is also not an unknown feature slightly helping to augment

their wages. But as this applies only to workers in the kitchen and information regarding this is not forthcoming, it is not possible to furnish any data on this point.

### *Hours of Work*

The degree of dependence of one social class on another and the degree of exploitation of one social class by another is indicated to a large extent by the working time of the wage labour. The question of the hours worked in a particular industry is next in importance only to the question of wages and the question of continuity or discontinuity of work, in an examination of the conditions of employment. "Whether more or less be earned", wrote Charles Booth, "affects, no doubt, immediate comfort, whereas a working day unduly prolonged injures the whole life".<sup>13</sup>

The hours of work in a particular industry are influenced by various factors, the most important among which may be counted the amount of skill demanded, the character of the work, the degree of organization achieved, the controlling effects of the Factory acts, the character and capacity of the employers, and the method of remuneration.

Domestic service, owing to its very nature as an occupation, besides other reasons, is unpopular because of the length and irregularity of hours required of workers in many homes. This indefiniteness is one of the great stumbling blocks to workers in this field of employment and the cause of general discontent. It is a recognised fact that the worker in a private household is under pressure to work extremely long hours. That is because, as Frieda S. Miller says, "Human needs cannot be divided into even units of work and made to stop at the stroke of a clock, as can factory production. If the same person who prepared the family breakfast is expected to prepare a late dinner and clean up afterward, her work day can scarcely be less than 12 hours and may be much longer".<sup>14</sup>

Let us now turn to our data and see what is the length of

13. Charles Booth: op. cit. Second Series Vol. 5, p. 182.

14. Frieda S. Miller. op. cit.

hours that the domestic servants put in to satisfy the demands of their employers. We read from table 28a that the average number of hours of work put in by men domestics is 12.4 per day. Of these, the Gujaratis have the highest average working day of 13.2 hours, and the Marathis, the lowest, of 11.2 hours. The Christians, on the whole, work for about 12.9 hours a day.

TABLE 28a

AVERAGE HOURS OF WORK PER DAY PUT IN BY

*Men Domestics*

Hours of work per day	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Average Hours	12.9	13.2	11.2	12.4

Table 28b giving details about women domestics, shows a marked variation from above. Here the average number of hours worked by the women is 7.8 per day. This comparatively low average for the working day for all women can be explained by the fact that a large bulk of the Gujarati and the Marathi women, with a few exceptions, are part-time daily workers working at more than one place, who put in, on an average, 6.01 and 6.3 hours of work a day respectively. The Christian women, on the other hand, who are mostly full-time resident workers do not have such a short working day, for their hours of work are approximately 12.2 which is almost the same as those for men domestic workers in general.

TABLE 28b

AVERAGE HOURS OF WORK PER DAY PUT IN BY

*Women Domestics*

Hours of work per day	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Average Hours	12.2	6.01	6.3	7.8

As we know that the averages do not represent a true picture of the facts concerned, a better idea as to the number of hours worked by different numbers of employees can be had by grading the hours as is done in table 29a. Here we find that among men domestics the largest number of workers, about 48 per cent in all, work for 12 to 14 hours a day which is true for all the communities; and the next largest group, 25.8 per cent have a still greater working day of 15 to 17 hours. With the exception of the Marathis, this also is true for both the Gujeratis and the Christians. A significant number of persons, about 17.8 per cent work for 9 to 11 hours a day, whereas, those working less than 8 hours constitute only a small minority of about 8.4 per cent of the workers.

TABLE 29a

THE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES WORKING FOR  
DIFFERENT NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY

<i>Men Domestics</i>								
Hours of work	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
3 -- 5			1	1.2	4	5	5	2.1
6 -- 8	5	6.2	1	1.2	9	11.3	15	6.3
9 -- 11	11	13.8	8	10	24	30	43	17.8
12 -- 14	40	50	45	56.4	30	37.5	115	48
15 -- 17	24	30	25	31.2	13	16.2	62	25.8
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100



The lower average of working hours of the women domestic servants, as shown in table 29b, can be explained by the fact that among women, the largest number, about 33 per cent, work only for 6 to 8 hours a day which is true for all the communities except the Christians among whom the majority of servants have a working day of 12 to 14 hours like the men workers. The second largest group of servants, on the whole have a still shorter working day of only 2 to 5 hours. Again, community-wise this is true only for the Gujeratis and the Marathis, whereas, among the Christians the second largest group of workers, about 24.2 per cent, have a much longer working day of 15 to 17 hours. We note that among the Gujeratis and the Marathis there are only 4 persons in all who work for 12 to 14 hours, and none with a working day exceeding 14 hours. It must be pointed out here that the shorter working hours of the Gujerati and the Marathi women domestic workers may not be taken to understand that life for

TABLE 29b

THE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES WORKING FOR  
DIFFERENT NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY

*Women Domestics*

Hours of work	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
3 -- 5	1	1.4	35	46.1	39	34	75	29
6 -- 8	8	11.4	23	31.1	55	48	86	33
9 -- 11	12	17.2	14	18.8	20	17.2	46	17.7
12 -- 14	32	46	3	4	1	.8	36	13.8
15 -- 17	17	24.2	--	--	--	--	17	6.5
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

them is more leisurely. Surely not! On the contrary, these workers are burdened with similar work in their own households, for, after working hours at the place of service they have to go home and perform similar duties of a housewife which hardly leave them any breathing time even.

Uptill now we have seen only the actual working hours of the men and women domestics. The hours being considerably long in most cases, it is essential that we should find out how many hours of rest intervals they have in-between working hours. A period of adequate rest for health and welfare, and time for other responsibilities and for leisure are important to workers in any field of occupation, for fatigue has come to be recognised as injurious to the workers' health and well-being, even though the task be of the easiest kind. And, although domestic work may not be as strenuous as work in the factories or the fields, yet it is not light enough to be discarded in a consideration of rest intervals for the workers in the households.

In table 30a we note that on an average the men servants enjoy a total of 3 hours of rest period during afternoons and evenings combined. Of these, the Marathis have the highest average of 3.8 hours of rest interval in-between working hours, while the Gujerati servants have a mere 2.4 hours of such a break during the day. It should be added here that not all the servants have some evening hours given free, for we do have quite a few individuals who are given free time in the evenings only on al-

TABLE 30a

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS OF REST INTERVAL  
IN-BETWEEN WORKING HOURS ENJOYED  
BY DOMESTICS PER DAY

*Men Domestics*

Hours of Rest Interval	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Average Hours of Rest Interval	2.9	2.4	3.8	3

ternate days, and, some others have it only occasionally; while we have one or two individuals in our sample who do not have even that much and have to be on duty the whole evening. Besides, there is no uniformity in working and rest periods for domestic servants. One man may be having only a 5-hour working day with 6 to 7 hours of rest interval in-between working time, while another has a 15-hour schedule of work with a bare 1½ hours of time off and that too for a hasty afternoon meal.

The average number of hours of rest for the women servants shown in table 30b is 3.1 being almost the same as that for the men. Here it is the Gujarati women who have the maximum number of hours, about 4.1, a day between morning and afternoon work. The Christians and the Marathis enjoy a mere 2.7 hours of break during the working day. Here it should be remembered once again that the time off from work for the Gujarati and the Marathi women is hardly any time for rest, for this is the time they spend in performing their daily chores in their own homes. For the resident Christian women servants, especially those who are employed to look after very young children, there is not much of a peace even at night; for several of them complained of having to be disturbed by young children even in the middle of their night rest. Like the men domestics, the women too, do not have a uniformity of work and rest periods during the day; for while several of them are over-worked, there are quite a few who enjoy a good number of hours off-duty. Resi-

TABLE 30b  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS OF REST INTERVAL  
IN-BETWEEN WORKING HOURS ENJOYED  
BY DOMESTICS PER DAY

Hours of Rest Interval	<i>Women Domestics</i>			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Average Hours of Rest Interval	2.7	4.1	2.7	3.1

dent domestic workers, on the whole, however, are subject to great exploitation in this respect, especially owing to the quaint notion harboured by some housewives that servants get spoilt if they are allowed to rest; and one of the reasons for dissatisfaction among these people is the tendency in many homes to require much over-time with no extra pay.

An average of 12-hour work schedule, running into 15 and 17 hours for some cases, with only a total of about 3 hours of break in-between working hours, for resident servants in particular, is no doubt a considerable one where legislation provides for 10 and 8 hours in other trades and industries. A servant is normally liable to be called on at any time between rising and going to bed. Even if the servant is not doing any active work, he or she is expected to be "on duty" or "on call" and these are included in working hours. It is for these reasons that domestic service is considered "a tic" by the workers and there is a general feeling among them of being under orders all day; of being never "off-duty". Lack of freedom in this branch of occupation is the expressed or unexpressed grievance in a large number of cases, which is in part inherent in the very nature of domestic service where the servant is often expected to become part of the employer's family sharing its life and needs. In connection with the length of hours in domestic service C. V. Butler rightly remarks, "Every trade has its compulsory hours but the poor servant is left entirely to the mistress to treat her as she feels, sometimes not very kindly".<sup>15</sup>

It is a recognised fact that rest and recreation are necessary for the health of the human being. Excessive labour robs men of all ambition to ask for anything more than will satisfy the immediate needs of the body. "The form of degradation that follows from excessive hours of labour", wrote Charles Booth, "takes different shapes. It may even be compatible with regular work, good wages, and abundant food; for, too long hours tend to create a mechanical and absorbed mind, indifferent alike to home and to the wider interests of life . . . It may not involve as great economic or physical evils, but its moral effects are hardly

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15. C. V. Butler, *op. cit.* p. 30.

less regrettable and sinister".<sup>16</sup> As will be seen in a later chapter this general indifference to the wider interests of life detected in the servants as a class, is not owing to any incapacity, or lack of desire to enjoy the best in life, but because they have not been provided the time and the scope for it, service being on the whole very limited as an occupation.

### *Weekly Day of Rest and Holidays*

A discussion of the hours of work and rest leads us to a consideration of days of rest and other holidays with pay enjoyed by the domestic servants. Apart from having a few hours for rest and recreation every day, workers in every field of occupation, whether manual workers, or brain workers require a day of rest at the end of a stipulated number of days, which is in most cases one day in a week, and also an annual holiday with full pay. In a report of the International Labour Office on Holidays with Pay, it is stated that, "The Social importance of payment for rest days is such that the principle has been acknowledged in various recent constitutions as one of the worker's social rights. Together with the annual holiday with pay, a practice which . . . has become almost universal, it has done much to improve the worker's lot."<sup>17</sup>

It cannot be denied that workers who are assured of their pay enjoy greater material security, for to them the days of rest are no more a cause of material loss. A period of rest goes a long way in restoring energy and will-power, and in making the workers feel fit in the discharge of their duties. "Thus assured of their daily remuneration", continues the Report, "they can take a more lively interest in their spare-time occupations. They can enjoy their leisure to the full without anxiety as to loss of pay, and its value, psychological as well as physiological is thereby greatly enhanced".<sup>18</sup>

Let us see to what extent the workers in domestic service enjoy such privileges in respect of weekly days of rest and annual holidays with pay. Table 31a for men servants indicates

16. Charles Booth: op. cit. p. 199.

17. I.L.O. Reports and Enquiries: 'Holidays With Pay: Public Holidays and Weekly Rest Days'. *International Labour Review*, 60, July 1949.

18. *Ibid.*

TABLE 31a

THE NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF DAYS-OFF WITH PAY  
ENJOYED BY SERVANTS*Men Domestics*

Number and Frequency of Days-off	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
1 day once a week	2	2.5	—	—	1	1.2	3	1.2
$\frac{1}{2}$ day once a week	19	23.8	19	23.8	7	8.7	45	18.8
1 day twice a month	—	—	1	1.2	—	—	1	.4
$\frac{1}{2}$ day twice a month	4	5	7	8.7	3	3.7	14	5.8
1 day once a month	1	1.2	2	2.5	11	13.8	14	5.8
$\frac{1}{2}$ day once a month	2	2.5	1	1.2	2	2.5	5	2.1
$\frac{1}{2}$ day occasionally	26	32.5	30	37.6	27	34	83	34.6
2-4 hours occasionally	8	10	8	10	1	1.2	17	7
No leave given	17	21.3	12	15	27	34	56	23.4
No leave taken	1	1.2	—	—	1	1.2	2	.8
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

that as far as the weekly day of rest is concerned, only 1.2 per cent of the workers enjoy this right. The largest number, about 34.6 per cent, are given only half-a-day's leave occasionally varying from once or twice a month to once in two or three months. This is true invariably for all the communities taken separately. The next largest group of workers, 23.4 per cent, have said that they are given no leave at all, and if they do take any, their pay is cut. Another large group of workers, on the other hand, 18.8 per cent of the total, are accorded half-a-day a week for time off duty. One Gujarati servant enjoys one full day's leave twice a month, while 14 other workers, i.e., about 5.8 per cent, of whom

11 are Marathis,<sup>19</sup> 2 Gujeratis, and 1 Christian have one full day away from work once a month, and an equal number have half-a-day twice a month. The rest are given a leave of half-a-day once a month, or just two to four hours occasionally and so on. It is curious that two domestics, one Christian and one Marathi have stated that they never ask for leave of their own will.

For the women servants, the conditions are even worse than those for men as seen in table 31b. Here only one person enjoys one full day of rest in a week, and she is a Christian. The majority of the workers, i.e., about 46.4 per cent of the total are not given any leave save on pain of forfeiting the day's wage. The situation as regards leave differs for the women domestics owing to the fact that a vast bulk of them, except the Christians, are non-resident workers who take leave of about one or two days occasionally without even asking for the employer's permission. About 17 per cent of workers take such leave and their pay is not cut, for others of course there is always a fear of losing their wages. 15.8 per cent of the women servants enjoy only half-a-day's leave occasionally. We note from the table that for the Gujerati and the Marathi women there is no stipulated day off from work except in one or two cases where one Marathi woman gets one full day off once a month, and another gets half-a-day off once a week. It is only among the Christians that we find some definiteness as regards weekly or monthly leave. Here we find that about 28.5 per cent of the Christian women are given half-a-day of rest twice a month, while 11.4 per cent get half-a-day once a week. The time off duty for others consists in either 2 to 4 hours twice a month or occasionally. As many as 10 per cent get no leave at all. Again, it is curious to note that 3 Gujerati and 3 Marathi women have stated that they never take any leave, for as they have remarked that, *leave taken one day means double the amount of work the next day* which they very much like to avoid.

19. These Marathi men servants who take one day's leave every month take it on the New Moon day (Amavasya) by way of custom which prescribes a suspension of work on that day.

TABLE 31b

THE NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF DAYS-OFF WITH PAY  
ENJOYED BY SERVANTS*Women Domestic*

Number and Frequency of Days-off	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
1 day once a week	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.3
$\frac{1}{2}$ day once a week	8	11.4	—	—	1	.8	9	3.5
1 day twice a month	2	2.8	—	—	—	—	2	.7
$\frac{1}{2}$ day twice a month	20	28.5	—	—	—	—	20	7.7
1 day once a month	1	1.4	—	—	1	.8	2	.7
$\frac{1}{2}$ day once a month	3	4.3	—	—	—	—	3	1.1
1 day in 2-3 months	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.3
$\frac{1}{2}$ day occasionally	16	23	8	10.5	17	14.8	41	15.8
2-4 hours occasionally	11	15.8	—	—	—	—	11	4.2
1-2 days occasionally	—	—	27	36	17	14.8	44	17
No leave given	7	10	37	49.5	76	66	120	46.4
No leave taken	—	—	3	4	3	2.6	6	2.3
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

The two tables for men and women domestic workers, therefore, indicate that the weekly Rest Day enjoyed by workers in other fields of occupation is practically a myth for them save in very exceptional cases of whom we have only 4 in a whole sample of 500 cases. For a majority of workers the leave consists of only half-a-day and that too at longer intervals of a fortnight or



even a month. For others it is very uncertain and that sometimes only for a few hours very reluctantly accorded by the annoyed employer; while quite a large number get no leave with pay at all, for every time they take it they have to forgo their wage for the day. Such a situation, as Dorothy M. Elliott explains it, may be partly due to the fact that, "the running of a home is continuous work, and domestic work is comparable with the maintenance of public services and cannot be stopped for a week end".<sup>20</sup>

It must be pointed out here in a discussion of holidays, that a large number of persons in our sample have stated that they do get leave on their respective communal festivals, such as Divali, Dassera, and Holi for the Hindu servants, and Christmas and Easter for the Christians. But at the same time if the employer belongs to the same community as the servant, observing the same festivals, then it so happens in some cases that the servant instead of getting leave for the festival is burdened with almost double the amount of work to meet the requirements of the occasion. This has been specially reported by the Christian domestics in a tone of bitter complaint.

As mentioned before, apart from a weekly day of rest, the workers in any industry need an annual paid holiday which may enable them to recover physically, at least to some extent, from the wear and tear caused by their work and by the general strain of present-day living conditions. This need which has been widely recognised is substantiated by the fact that the worker has the same moral right to a holiday as any other member of society. "In view of its advocates", writes A. Haulot, "... an annual holiday answers both the moral and the physical needs of the worker".<sup>21</sup>

With respect to the domestic workers in our sample, who hardly enjoy a monthly, leave aside a weekly, day of rest, the situation regarding annual holiday with pay cannot be expected to be any better. This expectation is fully corroborated by data presented in our tables.

20. Dorothy M. Elliott: op. cit.

21. A. Haulot: 'Some Practical Aspects Of The Workers' Annual Holiday'. *International Labour Review*, 62, 1950.

It is seen in the table 32a that the one striking fact is that 84.6 per cent of the men servants do not enjoy any annual holiday with pay, and that only about 15.4 per cent of them get anything by way of such a paid holiday. Of these, 10.8 per cent have one full month's leave a year with pay. If we study the table community-wise we find that it is the Gujarati men servants who are the greatest beneficiaries in this respect, for, among them, 21.3 per cent of the workers get such leave, whereas, among the Christians and the Marathis there are only 6.3 and 5 per cent of individuals in this category. About 3.3 per cent of the total number of workers get a yearly leave of either 15 or 20 days, with pay and they are all Gujaratis and Marathis, while one Marathi servant gets 8 days of such holiday.

On the other hand there are 2 Christians who get a stipulated leave of one full month but in 2 years, and not annually.

TABLE 32a

THE NUMBER OF DAYS OF ANNUAL HOLIDAY WITH PAY  
ENJOYED BY SERVANTS

*Men Domestics*

Annual Holiday- No. of Days	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
1 month in 1 year	5	6.3	17	21.3	4	5	26	10.8
20 days in 1 year	—	—	3	3.7	—	—	3	1.2
15 days in 1 year	—	—	2	2.5	3	3.8	5	2.1
8 days in 1 year	—	—	—	—	1	1.2	1	.4
1 month in 2 years	2	2.5	—	—	—	—	2	.8
Total No. of persons given Holiday	7	8.8	22	27.5	8	10	37	15.4
Total No. of persons not given Holiday	73	91.2	58	72.5	72	90	203	84.6
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

The situation for the women domestics is even worse as depicted in table 32b. Here as many as 97.4 per cent of the workers receive nothing by way of a paid annual holiday, and there are barely 2.6 per cent of the cases enjoying such privilege. Only 3 persons in our group, 2 of whom are Christian and 1 Marathi, are given the benefit of a full month's annual holiday with pay. One Marathi woman gets 15 days in a year while another gets 1 or 2 months of leave in only 4 or 5 years. (This could hardly be counted as a regular holiday). One Christian woman gets 1 month's holiday in 2 years. There is one enviable instance, however, of a Christian woman servant who is in a favourable position of enjoying 40 days of leave every year with pay. Such cases in the servant class are extremely rare and should not be taken

TABLE 32b

THE NUMBER OF DAYS OF ANNUAL HOLIDAY WITH PAY  
ENJOYED BY SERVANTS

*Women Domestics*

Annual Holiday- No. of days	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
40 days in 1 year	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.3
1 month in 1 year	2	2.9	—	—	1	.8	3	1.1
15 days in 1 year	—	—	—	—	1	.8	1	.3
1 month in 2 years	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.3
1-2 months in 4-5 years	—	—	—	—	1	.8	1	.3
10-15 days in 4-5 years	—	—	1	1.3	—	—	1	.3
Total No. of persons given Holiday	4	5.7	1	1.3	3	2.4	8	2.6
Total No. of persons not given Holiday	66	94	74	98.7	112	97.6	252	97.4
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

to indicate that the domestic servants in general are in any way privileged in this respect, for the over-all figures present just the contrary situation.

That a great majority of domestic servants do not get a paid annual holiday does not mean that they do not take a holiday. About 60 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women have admitted visiting their native places regularly once in one or two years for rest and recuperation, and some others at longer intervals of 2 to 5 years. There are also a few among them, about 8 per cent men and 4 per cent women who pay a visit to their homes in the villages 2 to 4 times in one year. Very few have declared that owing to lack of means they cannot afford such a holiday.

The duration of their stay in the native place, which corresponds to the length of the holiday, varies from 8 to 15 days to 3 to 4 months. But a majority of the servants, more than half the number of both men and women, stay away for about 1 or 2 months. Those who go away for a greater length of time do so after a break up from a job rather than for a holiday.

The holiday for a visit to their native places is taken by the domestic servants, as is true for all other workers, for several reasons like a change of climate, attending marriages, attending to some sick relative, or in case of their own illness, celebrating religious festivals like the Divali, Dassera or Holi,<sup>22</sup> or sometimes even for giving a helping hand in agriculture when the individual possesses land in the village, especially after the rainy season.

This makes it clear that on the whole most of our domestic servants do not forgo their holiday, whether long or short in duration, owing to the conditions of domestic service; but as mentioned before, these people have to do it at the risk of forfeiting their wages, and sometimes even at the risk of losing their jobs. The privileges of an annual paid holiday enjoyed by the workers in other industries are practically unknown to the household workers, for along with the burden of incurring extra expense on a holiday is coupled in their case an additional burden of losing their pay which is forbidding to these poorer classes of society.

22. A large number of the Marathi men domestics take a leave during the Holi festival and pay a visit to their villages

*Sick Leave And Medical Aid*

A discussion of holidays and other forms of privilege leave for any class of workers, provided by the conditions prevailing in a particular industry, would surely necessitate also a mention made as to the provision of sick leave with pay accorded to them. Domestic servants like all other human beings are liable to suspend their work for a shorter or longer duration in case of illness according to the needs of the situation. It is left to be seen how far the conditions of domestic service permit the workers engaged in it to avail themselves of the benefit of a sick leave with pay or even without it.

So far as the individuals in our sample are concerned, as many as 62 per cent of the total men servants are allowed to stay away from work in the event of an illness for a period ranging from 1 to 12 days, when they do not have the fear of having to lose their wages. Of these, the largest number, 43.1 per cent can take sick leave for 8 to 10 days while a very small number, only 2 per cent, can take a leave exceeding 10 days but less than 12. On the other hand, quite a good number, 21.2 per cent in all, have stated that if they took any form of sick leave, even if it be for 1 day they stood the chances of losing their wage. While 7.1 per cent have even stated that ill or well they are forced to work in all circumstances and have no alternative if they are resident servants. 10 per cent of the workers have had no experience of illness at their present jobs.

Among women household workers there are fewer persons who enjoy the benefit of a sick leave ranging from 1 to 10 days, and they are 44 per cent of the total. Of these the largest number get this benefit for 8 to 10 days, the Christians being in a majority, and the rest less than that. It is significant to note that as many as 41 per cent of the total number of women get sick leave without pay, that is, every time they stay away from work, even owing to illness, they lose their wages, illness for them being a double burden, in the form of extra expenditure and loss of wage. On the other hand, 10.4 per cent of the workers have said that they are forced to work when ill, although most of them are non-resident servants, because they cannot afford to have their meagre pay cut; and 5.4 per cent of them have had no experience of illness.

Provision for sick leave, as seen above shows wide variations for the domestic workers, ranging from conditions where a very kind employer, apart from paying wages for work not done on sick days, carries food and drink to the sick servant, to those where the servant is forced to work even when ill, reflecting upon the harsh treatment meted out to some servants by very unscrupulous employers. On the whole we find that the conditions of domestic service, as far as sickness for the workers is concerned, are very precarious. It is evident that hardly any employee in the household can afford to take sick leave for more than 12 or at the most 15 days without running the risk of losing the job itself, leave aside losing the wages for time out for illness. About seven persons in our sample have reported that they were forced to leave their previous jobs because of illness. The same applies

TABLE 33a

SOURCES OF MEDICAL AID IN TIMES OF ILLNESS  
OBTAINED BY SERVANTS

*Men Domestics*

Sources of Medical Aid	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Private Dr. with personal expense	37	46.4	32	40	38	47.5	107	44.6
Aid given by employer	29	36.2	39	49	34	42.5	102	42.5
Part employer part personal	4	5	3	3.7	5	6.2	12	5
No experience of illness	10	12.5	6	7.4	3	3.7	19	7.9
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

TABLE 33b

SOURCES OF MEDICAL AID IN TIMES OF ILLNESS  
OBTAINED BY SERVANTS*Women Domestic*

Sources of Medical Aid	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Private Dr. with perso- nal expense	34	48.7	49	65.5	68	59.2	151	58.2
Aid given by employer	24	34.5	10	13.4	12	10.5	46	17.6
Part em- ployer part personal	4	5.6	14	18.6	34	29.5	52	20.1
No experience of illness	8	11.4	2	2.7	1	.8	11	4.2
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

to women servants on maternity leave. About 3 women, interviewed in their own homes, were on maternity leave without pay at the time of enquiry and were constantly living under fear of losing their jobs from where they had taken leave.

Speaking of sick leave with or without pay leads us to the question of who provides for medical aid to the domestic workers especially in case of a minor ailment. The relationship between the employer and the employee being very close in domestic service, especially for the resident servant, it may be expected that the employer lends a helping hand to the servant, particularly if he happens to be long in his service and is considered as one of the family.

Referring to our table 33a we find that about 42.5 per cent of the men domestics, of whom the largest number are among

the Gujaratis, receive medical aid from their employers, while 44.6 per cent have stated that they incur their own expenses in the time of illness. 5 per cent of the workers are only partially or sometimes aided by their employers, part of the expenses they have to bear themselves. About 7.9 per cent have said that they have had no experience of illness at their present place of service.

Among women, as shown in table 33b, there are fewer persons receiving medical aid from their employers, for they are only 17.7 per cent of the total. A large number, as many as 58.2 per cent, receive no such aid and have to incur their own expense visiting a private doctor, or resorting to municipal dispensaries and hospitals where they say they very often cannot afford to waste their time waiting in long queues. About 20.1 per cent have stated that they receive only partial aid from their employers and that too not always. 4.2 per cent of the employees have had no experience of illness at their present situation.

So we find that here also the conditions for domestics vary from one extreme where the employer pays all the doctor's bills and even the hospital bills, if needs be, for his sick servant in time of illness — and there are quite a good number of cases in our sample — to the other extreme where the poor servant is left to meet his own expenses which in some cases exhaust a considerable portion of his wages, even landing him in debt; and here we have even a larger number of such individuals.

### *Job Tenure*

The above survey of the conditions of work in domestic service bears out the general indefiniteness inherent in the very nature of the occupation. It is natural to expect on these grounds a great deal of shifting from one job to another. While discussing the conditions prevalent in the labour market for both domestic workers and farm labourers, Caplow very clearly explains the situation thus: "Because personal relationships are usually tested on a trial-and-error basis, there is a great deal of short-range mobility in both these occupations. In the absence of organization, the only coercive measure which can be taken against employers is abrupt resignation, and a great many jobs are quitted after a few days or weeks. On the other hand, where the relationship is



successfully established, the same job is often held over for a life-time".<sup>23</sup>

A glance at the table 34a which presents data regarding the time spent suffices to show that for the men servants, the average job tenure is 5.5 years, the Gujeratis showing the highest average of 6.2 years and the Marathis, the lowest average of 4.8 years. Also, we see that the largest number of persons, about 42.6 per cent of the total, which is true for all communities, have held their present job for 1 to 5 years at the time of enquiry; while the next largest group of workers, 21.3 per cent have held it for even

TABLE 34a

JOB TENURE

NUMBER OF YEARS SPENT AT PRESENT SERVICE BY  
DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF MEN DOMESTICS

Job Tenure Average No. of years	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	5.5 yrs.		6.2 yrs.		4.8 yrs.		5.5 yrs.	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Less than 1 month	2	2.5	—	—	1	1.2	3	1.2
Less than 1 year	22	27.5	14	17.5	15	18.6	51	21.3
1 — 5 years	27	33.7	32	40	43	53.9	102	42.6
6 — 10 years	19	23.7	22	27.5	10	12.4	51	21.3
11 — 15 years	3	3.7	5	6.2	7	8.7	15	6.2
16 — 20 years	2	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.5	6	2.4
21 — 25 years	2	2.5	3	3.7	2	2.5	7	2.9
Over 25 years	3	3.7	2	2.5	—	—	5	2
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

23. Caplow T. Op. cit. pp. 176-177.

less than a year. An equal number have said that they have been at their present job for 6 to 10 years. We find that from 10 years onwards, there is a considerable drop in numbers in all the communities. On the other hand, we do have cases serving upto 20 or 25 years and even more, the maximum reported being 35 years at the same place of service, but these cases are few and far between, constituting only 5 per cent of the total.

The table 34b for women household workers shows exactly a similar situation, the average job tenure for them being 5.4 years, the Gujaratis showing the highest average of 6.9 years, and

TABLE 34b

JOB TENURE

NUMBER OF YEARS SPENT AT PRESENT SERVICE BY  
DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF WOMEN DOMESTICS

Job Tenure Average No. of years	Christians		Gujaratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	4.06 yrs.		6.9 yrs.		5.3 yrs.		5.4 yrs.	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Less than 1 month	1	1.4	3	4	1	.8	5	1.9
Less than 1 year	16	22.9	10	13.5	29	25.2	55	21.1
1 — 5 years	38	54.3	27	36	45	39.2	110	42.4
6 — 10 years	8	11.4	11	14.6	25	21.8	44	16.9
11 — 15 years	3	4.3	11	14.6	8	6.9	22	8.4
16 — 20 years	1	1.4	7	9.6	6	5.2	14	5.4
21 — 25 years	2	2.8	1	1.3	—	—	3	1.1
Over 25 years	1	1.4	1	1.3	1	.8	3	1.1
Temporary work	—	—	4	5.3	—	—	4	1.5
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

the Christians, the lowest, of 4.06 years. The majority of persons, 42.4 per cent in all have worked for only 1 to 5 years at the same place, which is true for all the communities to a lesser or greater extent. Here too, the next largest group of workers, 21.1 per cent have held their present job for even less than 1 year, while about 16.9 per cent have held it for 6 to 10 years. After 10 years, the numbers become much fewer and there are hardly 2.2 per cent of the individuals who have held on to one place of service for more than 20 years.

The figures reflect a good deal of shifting in this field of occupation which is largely due to a great amount of variation in the conditions of service from one house to another. The domestic workers in general harbour a constant expectation that the working conditions are better in households other than the ones they are working at, and quit their job in order to "better themselves" for temptations offered by other employers, in many cases only to find themselves where they were when facing the reality of the situation.

On the other hand, the more steady elements among them, who are very few in number, stick to their jobs for 15, 20, 25 years and even for a lifetime, thus reflecting a very successful relationship established between the employer and the employed. Such situations are rare to find and do not represent a true picture of domestic service, where the normal career of the worker includes frequent changes of employment with very little occupational security with which it is associated.

It might be suggested that a want of confidence between the servant and the employer is one of the chief causes of the servant leaving the job. Some employers treat their servants like *robot machines* to act according to their will and carry out their orders from morning till night; while it must not be forgotten that some of the servants on the other hand consider the employer as a source from where they can get all the cash money only to leave him and go to someone else who offers them to pay slightly better.

This brings us to a consideration of the nature of relationship between master and servant involved in domestic service. From the survey of the conditions and of the essential character

of the services performed, it has become evident that the relations between the servant — especially the resident servant — and the master are to a large extent very different from those prevailing between employer and employed in most of the other branches of industry. In middle-class households in particular, there is a more constant and intimate contact between them, and the servant's duties are on the whole less definite and delimited. In other words, the employer-employee relationship is very close. As has been pointed out by Charles Booth, while discussing the master-servant relationship, "... the ordinary relations between employers and employed in other walks of life cannot endure here".<sup>24</sup> The personal characteristics, and traits of temperament of the parties concerned go a long way towards making this unique relationship pleasant or reverse as the case may be. A question was asked accordingly, of the domestics in our sample as to the relations between them and their present employers, based on the kind of treatment they received, for, there is no doubt that the manner in which servants are treated varies greatly from house to house and has a bearing on employer — employee relationship.

TABLE 35a

RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND SERVANT AMONG  
*Men Domestics*

Relations between Employer and Servant	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Very Good	3	3.7	4	5	1	1.3	8	3
Good	40	50	49	61.1	47	59	136	57
Not quite good	36	45	26	32.6	29	36.2	91	38
Strained	1	1.3	1	1.3	3	3.7	5	2
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

24. Charles Booth: op. cit. Second Series, Vol. IV, p. 224.

As seen in table 35a, a majority of the men domestics, about 57 per cent, have said that they are on good terms with their employers, and 38 per cent have said that the relations are not quite good. At the same time, while at one extreme there are 3 per cent of the workers whose relations with their employers are very good, they being treated with great kindness and care like any other member of the family, at the other extreme we have about 5 individuals, constituting 2 per cent of our total, whose relations with their masters and mistresses are greatly strained, where there is no consideration for the servant who is treated almost like a *slave*, sometimes receiving a slap or two. (This is no doubt reported by one or two servants in our sample). All the communities individually conform more or less to the same pattern.

Among women domestics also, as shown in table 35b, a majority of the workers, about 63 per cent, have good relations with their employers, and 26.1 per cent do not have quite a good relationship. Again, we have at one extreme, about 3.7 per cent of the individuals where the relationship with their employers is

TABLE 35b

## RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND SERVANT AMONG

*Women Domestics*

Relations between Employer and Servant	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Very Good	2	2.9	5	6.6	3	2.6	10	3.7
Good	49	70	47	62.6	67	58	163	63
Not quite good	11	15.8	23	30.8	34	29.6	68	26.1
Strained	8	11.4	—	—	11	9.6	19	7.2
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

very good, and at the other extreme, about 7.2 per cent of the women servants who are not at all on happy terms with their masters and mistresses.

The above tables indicate that between two very small groups of workers, those who have established a perfectly happy relationship with their employers, and those who suffer under exceptionally bad employers treating them like human machines, there is a very large class among them where the master-servant relationship is tolerably good or not quite good. It should be remembered as Charles Booth has very cleverly drawn up the comparison, that, the relationship between the master and the servant bears similarity, in certain respects, to that subsisting between the sovereign and the subject, where both the servant and the subject are expected to have an "all-pervading attitude of watchful respect, accompanied by a readiness to respond at once to any gracious advance that may be made without ever presuming or for a moment 'forgetting themselves'."<sup>25</sup> If the servant has the necessary aptitude and experience for the relationship involved, then he is likely to obtain perfect comfort and even maintain a certain amount of dignity. But such instances of a perfect relationship are very rare to find, for many masters and mistresses are haughty, over-bearing and ill-tempered, while there are quite a few servants who do not give a satisfactory return by way of services.

It might be argued that at the present day master and servant are united by contract, that is, their relationship has a purely contractual basis, where the actual contract is limited and impersonal by nature. A servant on accepting a job as a household worker undertakes to perform a certain type of work and duties, not very specifically stated or understood everywhere, the master in return hires him to give him stipulated wages as well as board and lodging and other amenities in case of resident domestic service. But this is merely in theory. In actual practice both parties are more intimately and completely involved in this type of a relationship than is laid down in the terms of a mere contract. The employer is understood to assume a more far-reaching dominion over the activities of the servant, and the servant is sup-

25. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

posed to place his whole time and energy, and even his will at the disposal of his employer. Hence the root cause of the friction between the employer and the employed in domestic service, in case of less successful relationships, as pointed out by J. Jean Hecht is this, that the master seeks to impose "the extensive control and exact the perfect allegiance" to which he thinks he is entitled, while the servant on the other hand seeks "to limit his obligations and preserve an independence"<sup>26</sup> that do not conform with what is expected of him. This might be suggested as one of the reasons for the servants' quitting their jobs at short intervals and being generally on the move, apart from their desire to advance their material interests, already mentioned above.

*Workers' Satisfaction with the Conditions of Work in Domestic Service*

A survey of the conditions of work in any form of employment, and of the employer—employee relationship would be incomplete without taking into account the workers' own attitude towards their work, that is, whether they are satisfied or not with the conditions and relationships obtained in their particular branch of occupation. It is an already known fact that although wages and other cash benefits are the chief aims of the worker on the job, they are not the only aims, for a job means much more to him than that. It is closely integrated with his whole life, personality and experience and shapes his attitude towards his environment. "However humble his origin," writes the author in a report on 'A study in Economic Principles and Human Well-being,' "however menial his task, and however limited his educational opportunities or achievements—man is still a fellow human being. The mainsprings of his personality and of his attitude toward his job relationship derive from this basic need of the dignity of man".<sup>27</sup> For most people the largest and best part of their day is spent in work activities which play a dominant role in their lives," giving them status and binding them to society "...A man's work", as Everett Cherrington Hughes puts it, "is one

26. Jean Hecht. op. cit. p. 77.

27. *A study in Economic Principles and Human Well-being Labour and the American Economy*. Chamber of Commerce of the U.S. Washington D.C. 1953.

of the more important parts of his social identity, of his self, indeed of his fate, in the one life he has to live...."<sup>28</sup> Work, therefore, being of such crucial importance for the material as well as for the psychological well-being of the individual is normally liked by almost all human beings. When some people do not like their work, it does not mean that they do not like work as such, but that they are dissatisfied with some of the aspects of the work they are doing. In such cases, the fault chiefly lies in the psychological and social conditions of the job rather than in the workers as is pointed out by J. A. C. Brown.<sup>29</sup> It is understood that there are some tasks and occupations which are not very pleasant or socially satisfying, and even considered degrading in the eyes of society which may wound the workers' personal dignity.

One such occupation is domestic service which has been traditionally regarded as a low-standard occupation inherently degrading. The notion that it is less honourable to be employed by an individual than to be employed in the same capacity by an organization, along with the menial nature of the work, the limitation of personal freedom which is usually involved in it, and the snobbery of society to consider it as an unskilled type of work, is responsible for the occupation to be placed on the lowest rung of the occupational scale sometimes even below that of farm labourers and unskilled industrial workers.<sup>30</sup>

A question was therefore asked whether the domestic servants themselves were satisfied with the nature of their work which they performed and with the conditions prevailing in it, in order to gauge the extent of satisfaction or dissatisfaction on the part of this class of workers.

Table 36a shows the classification of the varying degrees of satisfaction in domestic work for men servants. We find that 43.5 per cent of them are satisfied with their work, and 2 persons, who are both Christians are even greatly satisfied with it. On the

28. Everett Cherrington Hughes: Article on Work and Self in *Social Psychology At The Cross Roads* Edited by J. H. Rohrer and M. Sheriff. New York 1951. p. 314.

29. J. A. C. Brown: *The Social Psychology of Industry*, Great Britain 1954 p. 189.

30. Caplow T. op. cit. p. 48.



TABLE 36a

## DEGREE OF SATISFACTION WITH THE NATURE OF THE WORK

*Men Domestics*

Degree of Satisfaction	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Greatly satisfied	2	2.5	—	—	—	—	2	.8
Satisfied	32	40	34	42.5	38	47.6	104	43.5
Not quite satisfied	14	17.5	6	7.5	9	11.2	29	12
Not at all satisfied	9	11.2	12	15	16	20	37	15.4
Forced to be satisfied	23	29	28	35	17	21.3	68	28.4
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

other hand there is a larger group of workers who show different degrees of dissatisfaction with their work. Among these, 12 per cent are not quite satisfied, while 15.4 per cent are not at all satisfied. This is the group of workers where there is a considerable amount of groaning and grumbling about their working conditions. It is curious to note that another 28.4 per cent have said that they are forced to be satisfied. These are the persons, who, though they are acutely aware of the disadvantages in their status and condition, accept it with a hidden grudge, reflecting a philosophic bent of mind, for as they have themselves said, there is no other alternative for them, and life would be all the more miserable of they harped upon their sorry state of affairs. This is no doubt to be taken as a suppressed dissatisfaction among these workers.

Women domestics, as shown in table 36b, have more workers who are satisfied with their work than those who are not, for they constitute 54.5 per cent of the total. One Marathi woman has even said that she is very happy about her work. Among those that show varying degrees of dissatisfaction, 11.1 per cent are not quite satisfied, while 11.5 per cent are not at all satisfied with household work. Here too we have a fair-sized group of women servants, about 22.6 per cent with an enforced or superficial satisfaction for reasons explained above.

That 49.6 per cent of the total number of men and women domestic servants have reported themselves as being satisfied, or even greatly satisfied with the nature of their work, should not be taken to mean that the conditions of work for all these people are

TABLE 36b

## DEGREE OF SATISFACTION WITH THE NATURE OF THE WORK

*Women Domestics*

Degree of Satisfaction	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Greatly satisfied	—	—	—	—	1	.8	1	.4
Satisfied	51	73	39	52	51	44.4	141	54.5
Not quite satisfied	6	8.5	3	4	20	17.4	29	11.1
Not at all satisfied	5	7.1	6	8	19	16.6	30	11.5
Forced to be satisfied	8	11.4	27	36	24	20.8	59	22.6
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

in any way much superior to those for the workers who are not satisfied save in a few exceptional cases, or that they are inherently a contented lot. It requires a deeper probing into the situation as such, and may be explained in this way that most of the workers, and among whom women are preponderant, who say they are satisfied with domestic work are satisfied because of their general all-round ignorance and lack of ambition. Coming chiefly from the villages, and having experienced the hardships in agricultural labour, they find domestic work comparatively easy and more comfortable, and are willing to forgo a good bit of their freedom and swallow much of their pride in exchange for the protection they obtain in domestic service. They, however, do not compare their condition with that of the workers in other branches of urban industry where the wages are higher, hours of work shorter and more definite, where there are fixed holidays and rest days with pay and where there is, on the whole, greater organization and legislative and social protection for the workers.

However, the whole question takes a different turn as soon as the domestic workers become conscious of the conditions in other forms of industry; for, we find that when the question 'whether they are desirous of doing any other work but this', in other words, whether they would leave domestic service and take up any other form of occupation if opportunities were offered, is put to them, most of the very same workers who say that they find satisfaction in their present work, report that they would definitely prefer such a change if such opportunities were offered, as can be seen from the fact that among the satisfied men workers in our sample, 78.3 per cent are desirous of taking up any other kind of work. It is natural to expect that among the dissatisfied workers, there is a slightly higher percentage of them, about 87.3, who are very anxious to give up domestic service. However, there are 21.7 per cent among satisfied workers, and 12.7 per cent among dissatisfied ones, who would not like to change over to any other occupation. But this could be explained by the fact that among these workers a large number of them have said that they feel themselves too old and incapable of doing any such work as in mills or factories, or even of learning any other trade.

Among women domestics the situation is found to be slightly different. Here even among satisfied workers, although the per-

centage of those desiring other occupations is higher than that of those not desiring such change, 62.6 as against 37.4, it is significant to note that the latter are more numerous than men in the same category. This may be due to the fact, that, apart from many persons who consider themselves rather too old to take up a new type of work, women in general are naturally better adapted to do domestic work. And many women, being only supplementary wage earners in their families, as will be seen in a later chapter, and hence having a lesser burden to bear, added to the fact that some of them are not permitted to work elsewhere owing to caste rules, are more prone to stick to domestic service as an occupation, in spite of its many disadvantages and drawbacks.

The one main cause of general discontent running through the whole servant class, apart from loss of liberty and long and irregular working hours, is lack of future prospects in domestic service. This is pointed out by almost all the workers interviewed. The question of prospects applies more acutely to men domestics than to women. For as we shall see later, it is among men workers that we find the largest number of sole and principal wage earners in their families; and when the wages are so low, and the prospects so meagre the general economic condition of their families is only left to be imagined. For the women the question of prospects is not so important, for many of them pursue this occupation only till the time they get married. After marriage, most of them give it up, except in cases where the husband's income is insufficient for family needs. Then too the income earned by these married women is only supplementary family income. The rest return to domestic service late in life especially when they are widowed or divorced. At that time most of them have grown-up children who have themselves started earning. In their case also, then, the income is chiefly a supplementary income in the family.

Therefore, we understand that it is necessary to probe into the question of prospects in the occupation only with regard to men servants. This could be done by correlating income with age to see whether income in domestic service increases or not with advancing age. In table 37, accordingly, we have the income distributed according to age-group of workers in each community. We see in the table that the average wage in the age-group below 20 for all communities is definitely the lowest, it being only Rs.

TABLE 37

CORRELATION BETWEEN AGE AND AVERAGE WAGE OF

*Men Domestics*

Age Group	Average Wages			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Below 20	21.1	32.4	20.4	22.2
21 — 30	34.5	46.1	34.1	37.01
31 — 40	53.6	57.9	49.8	55.03
41 — 50	59.3	54.1	51.6	56.4
51 — 60	54.0	64.7	53.2	58.9
Over 60	65	80	—	76.2

22.2 per month. There is a comparatively considerable rise to Rs. 37.01 in the next age-group of 21-30. Again, in the age-group 31-40 there is a big leap to an average of Rs. 55.03. After the age-group 31-40 we find that, though the income continues to increase with slight variations in all the three communities, the increase is relatively much smaller till we reach the age-group of over 60 where the average income of 4 men servants goes up to Rs. 76.2. But these are too few in number and too small a percentage in our sample to be taken to represent the average income, in general, of persons over 60.

Can we from this table draw the conclusion that in domestic service as in other occupations the employees receive a definite increment in their wage with the increasing length in service from their employers? It seems difficult to answer this question in the affirmative when we take into consideration the fact already observed above that the average job tenure for an individual in domestic service is only 5.5 years. Added to this is the fact that most servants have reported that they hardly received any increments in their wages after long years of service, and when they did

receive any, it was only in accordance with an increase in their work, or only a small increase, after long intervals. Of course this does not mean that servants receive no increments at all. But those that do, are only exceptional cases, who have been very fortunate in throwing their lot with a very considerate employer. The increase in the average wages of the servants in each age-group, however, can be explained in this way, that servants as a class are very mobile, and are prone to change their situations very frequently. And it is in this frequent change of situation that they are always on the look out for finding more opportunities of seeking and obtaining higher money-wages. By the time a man reaches the age of 30 or so he will have gained a lot of experience in domestic service and will not accept a wage lower than that he received at an earlier age, but will rather demand something higher.

What the domestic servants mean then, by a lack of prospects in domestic service is not that their wages do not increase with advancing years, which of course happens at the cost of great mobility, but that their wages are on the whole comparatively very low even in the highest age-group. It is thus the absolute lowness of wage which feature is correlated with the general low esteem of the occupation. Also, for the domestic servants there is nothing by way of social security with the advance of old age when they are unable to work and are forced to be thrown out of employment, for it is almost impossible for the rank and file of household workers to save out of their own small earnings for their old age. It would be significant to quote here the remark of an old domestic servant, that, failure to have any one to support them in their old age *would necessarily lead them to a life of begging!*

The conditions in domestic service as related above, the lack of standards in hours and wages and a total absence of social security, bring out in bold relief the one outstanding fact that it is an occupation untouched by such benefits as might be derived from organization.

Enquiries were made among the persons interviewed, as to whether they belonged to any such thing as a servants' organization. Similar enquiries were made at the Labour Commissioner's Office whether a Domestic Servants' Union had been registered

there among other labour organizations in the city of Bombay. In both cases replies were in a definite negative. It was, however, reported at the latter place that they did receive occasionally, applications for registration of the formulation of small organizations from some branches of the domestic workers but they always turned them down. The servants themselves sometimes stated that they did hear of some small attempts made by stray individuals to set up servants' unions, in all cases, however, meeting with failure, the individuals concerned in some cases even absconding with the money collected for the purpose from the domestic workers.

Trade-unionism among the domestic servants of Bombay being conspicuous by its absence would naturally lead one to question "Why?" Scrutinizing the different aspects of domestic service as an occupation, and the general characteristics of domestic servants as a class of workers, we realize that the difficulties in the formation of such an organization are great.

Bombay is a vast metropolis and the domestic workers are scattered all over from one end to another. Coupled with this is the fact that they are rather a mobile population, with the result, they have little means of developing among them a sense of comradeship. Again, it should be remembered that the domestic servants are not one compact group. They comprise members from different communities, having widely differing cultural and religious affiliations. These caste and communal distinctions exist in quite as sharp lines among domestic servants as elsewhere. Moreover, there is no homogeneity even as regards the ages of the workers concerned, for as observed before, there is a wide range in age variation running from 12 years and below, to 70 and above. This means that the interests differing on the line of sections are likely to be considerable and perhaps significant.

Also, as already noted, the relationship in domestic service between employer and employee is personal and one of mutual confidence. In this case an organization on the part of the workers may be considered inappropriate for such a relationship. While discussing the difficulties in the formation of a union among workers of certain trades, Charles Booth wrote, "the personal character of the relationship... may be so marked a feature, that the impersonal intervention of representatives of an organized

society is felt to have a certain irrelevancy and even impropriety."<sup>31</sup>

The indifference to organization among domestic servants may also be explained by the wide variation in conditions of employment from house to house. While a large number of workers are unhappy about their working conditions, there are quite a few, and a significant proportion, who are in quite a privileged position, being often treated as members of family by their employers. In the latter case, the workers might consider that their existing privileges would be threatened by combined action, and are likely to stand aloof in an attempt at organization.

Again, it might be suggested that a large group of workers in domestic service, and especially those of the younger generation may consider domestic work as only a transitional stage in their career, for, they are always on the look out for a job in other different spheres of industry. Such persons living constantly in a hope for change would consider it unnecessary to take the trouble to organize.

It should also be remembered that a large proportion of domestic workers are women, and "in the case of all female labour, instability of status — social rather than economic —"<sup>32</sup> is a standing obstacle to organization.

Last, and most important of all, is the apathy and ignorance of this class of workers that prevents the formation of an organization among them. Their economic weakness, being one of the lowest paid sections of the working population, results in a sense of depression which in turn reacts upon the ability for combined initiative. This is one of the chief reasons accounting for the absence of a cohering force and the development of leadership which is largely responsible for the failure to organize domestic servants into a trade union.

At this juncture it should be important to measure the servants' own attitude towards the setting up of a domestic workers' organization in the city. When it was enquired of the individuals

31. Charles Booth: *op. cit.* Second Series Vol. V, p. 177.

32. *Ibid.* p. 179.



in our sample whether they were desirous of such an organization as existed among other labourers, and whether they would support and participate in it, the following response was received as depicted in table 38a. It could be seen that as many as 93 per cent of the men servants have expressed a desire in favour of it, and 1.7 per cent are even very desirous of it, giving voice to radical opinions and even requesting the investigator to take a lead in the matter with their full support! Only 2.9 per cent of the workers, who have regarded it with suspicion, have shown an unfavourable attitude. 3 Christians, and 2 Marathis, forming 2.1

TABLE 38a

NUMBER OF PERSONS DESIROUS OF HAVING  
A DOMESTIC SERVANTS UNION

	<i>Men Domestic</i>							
	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Very desirous of a Servant's Union	1	1.2	3	3.8	—	—	4	1.7
Desirous of a Union	71	89	76	95	77	96.2	224	93.2
Not desirous of a Union	5	6.2	1	1.2	1	1.2	7	2.9
Could not understand what is meant by a Union	3	3.8	—	—	2	2.5	5	2.1
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

per cent of the total number of men servants, have not even understood what is meant by such an organization, and therefore have not given a reply.

Among women servants, as shown in table 38b, there are 82 per cent of the workers who are desirous of a servants' union, this figure, however, being slightly smaller than that for men. Three Gujarati women have shown great enthusiasm about it and have said that they are very desirous. Only 5.3 per cent of the women are not in favour of such an organization. As many as 30 persons,

TABLE 38b

NUMBER OF PERSONS DESIROUS OF HAVING  
A DOMESTIC SERVANTS UNION

*Women Domestic*

	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Very desirous of a Servans' Union	—	—	3	4	—	—	3	1.1
Desirous of a Union	48	68.5	66	88	100	87	214	82
Not desirous of a Union	9	12.9	4	5.3	—	—	13	5.3
Could not understand what is meant by a Union	13	18.6	2	2.6	15	13	30	11.6
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

i.e., 11.6 per cent of the total have not understood the question regarding a servants' union. This is natural to expect from very ignorant working class women.

On the whole the two tables bring to light a hitherto unexpressed desire to organize, on the part of a very large number of household workers of the city in spite of the above mentioned obstacles, who, if given the proper leadership, scope and time to attend to the matter, are not altogether lacking in a capacity for such an activity. It should be added here that although the desire is great among this class of workers, there is also observed an undercurrent of scepticism as to a successful functioning of such a union. This scepticism may be the result of certain defects in the methods of organization as betrayed by some stray previous attempts on the part of incapable or even fraudulent individuals.

Anyway, the still persistent desire to organize among the domestic servants, springs from a very great necessity to standardize the working conditions in domestic service as an occupation, which, owing to its failure to organize so far, and the general disrepute attached to it, is almost completely exempted from all forms of social legislation in India, a point discussed elsewhere in this study.

## CHAPTER VII

### GENERAL ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE DOMESTIC SERVANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

THE OCCUPATION and income of the individuals of a given social class have a definite bearing on the general economic condition of their families. A study of any occupation, therefore, necessitates not only an enquiry into the working conditions of those employed in it, but also makes it essential to determine to what extent the given occupation enables the workers to contribute towards the maintenance of their respective families, and, whether these families have any other means of support apart from the workers under consideration. In other words, it becomes imperative to investigate also into the combined resources of the workers' families in order to have a general estimate of their economic level, for, as Frederick Le Play, the earliest modern student of the working class, had once stated, "All the acts which constitute the life of a working man's family result more or less directly in an income or an outlay".<sup>1</sup> It is a recognised fact that the capacity of a given family or a group to acquire for spending is an essential factor in cost of living, for on this working strength depends its welfare and well-being.

However, we are confronted with added difficulties when we try to go beyond the wage-earner in order to estimate the total earning capacity of the family as an economic unit, for this would involve an ascertainment of the composition and general characteristics of the family and also of the wage-earning powers of other occupied members therein, which may include contributions of not only the wife or the husband and the children, but also of other relatives of the wage-earner, the families in many cases

1. LePlay, 'Ouvriers Europeen,' second edition, I, 224-28-Quoted from Carle Zimmerman, "The Family Budget As A Tool For Sociological Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology*, 33, 1928.

being of an extended type, and the household income becoming a very complex affair.

It was seen in a previous chapter that about 82.4 per cent of the families of men domestics, and 16.2 per cent of the families of women domestics in our sample are in the rural areas. With a few exceptions who carry on minor trades, most of these are families belonging to the class of agricultural labour, with some of their members coming down to Bombay seeking work as either Industrial or Domestic labourers, getting themselves scattered all over the place. The economic conditions of agricultural labour families have already been studied very intensively all over India as is evident from the numerous government and private surveys undertaken for the purpose.<sup>2</sup> It will suffice here to note briefly from the findings of some of these surveys that, (i) in general, the agricultural labour families include, besides the landless families, also the sub-marginal cultivators for whom agriculture is the main activity; (ii) the pressure of population on land being heavy, and agricultural income obviously inadequate, the opportunities for wage-paid employment being very meagre, some of the members of the family have to resort either to subsidiary occupations in the villages or to other occupations in the cities causing large-scale migrations owing to this important aspect of rural economy; (iii) it is the natural desire of the agricultural labourer to own and cultivate land himself, but owing to extreme poverty, the small holders are being gradually dispossessed of their lands and forced to labour on lands belonging to the upper classes for subsistence; (iv) on an average, if the agricultural labour family at all holds any land, the size of the holding is only 3.7 acres especially in the Bombay State; (v) employment in agriculture being of a seasonal character, the period of employing hired labour during peak seasons varying from five to six months in a year, the labourers are forced to seek in slack seasons other avenues of employment, which are of course very limited; (vi) the wages of agricultural labourers are sometimes paid in cash and sometimes partly in cash and partly in kind, the over all average wages in agriculture

2. Cf. (i) Reports of Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Government of India Labour Ministry 1955, (ii) Ramamurti *Agricultural Labour How They Work and Live*, 1954, (iii) Desai M.B. *The Rural Economy of Gujarat*, 1948.

being generally lower than those in factories chiefly because the earning power in agriculture is low.<sup>3</sup> On the whole, in the words of Prof. M. B. Desai, "The agricultural labourers live in the most appalling conditions and surroundings. They are poverty-stricken and have hardly enough means for two square meals and clothing to cover their bodies. Social amenities are unknown to them".<sup>4</sup>

It should be remembered that many of those domestic servants who have their families living in Bombay — and they are 17.6 per cent among men and 83.8 per cent among women — have not severed their ties with their villages, for they still have certain familial interests left behind as will be seen presently. Therefore we see that with a few exceptions, almost all the domestic servants in our sample have their roots in the villages. With this general background of their conditions in the villages, as origi-

TABLE 39a

INTERESTS IN THE NATIVE PLACE BY WAY  
OF HOUSE OR LAND

Interests in Native Place	<i>Men Domestics</i>							
	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
House and land	32	40	43	54	62	77.5	137	57
House only	37	46.5	33	41	13	16.3	83	34.5
Land only	1	1.2	—	—	2	2.5	3	1.3
No house or land	10	12.5	4	5	3	3.8	17	7.2
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

3. Ibid.

4. M. B. Desai, *The Rural Economy of Gujarat*, p. 150, 1948.

nally belonging to the class of agricultural labourers, before us, we proceed to study the economic conditions of their families.

Of primary importance for our investigation is the question of interests in the native place by way of land or house. We see from table 39a, which furnishes data on the point, that 57 per cent of the men servants have both a small house and a piece of land in their native places, 34.5 per cent have no land but only a house, while 1.3 per cent have only some land. 7.2 per cent of the men have stated that they have no such interests left in their native place.

Of the women, on the other hand as seen in table 39b, only 26.2 per cent have both a house and land, the Marathis, however, having the largest number, about 43.5 per cent in their community having both of them. 42 per cent of the women have only a house, and 2 Marathi women, constituting 0.8 per cent of the total have no house but land. As many as 31.2 per cent of the

TABLE 39b  
INTERESTS IN THE NATIVE PLACE BY WAY  
OF HOUSE OR LAND

*Women Domestic*

Interests in Native Place	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
House and land	12	17.2	6	8	50	43.5	68	26.2
House only	24	34.5	42	56	43	37.4	109	42
Land only	—	—	—	—	2	1.7	2	0.8
No house or land	34	48.3	27	36	20	17.4	81	31.2
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

women's families have no interests, by way of house or land, in the villages. These are the families who seem to have no permanent interests left in their native places and have settled down in the city for good.

The houses which these people have in the villages are mostly of a "kachcha" type, but all have stated unanimously that they are more spacious and healthy than those available to them in the city (except in the servants' quarters).

As for land, which, in the words of Carle Zimmerman, "in itself plays an almost unique role in agricultural life",<sup>5</sup> it is almost always a small piece not exceeding two or three acres and very often much less than that even, for these people. This is disheartening when economists have agreed that atleast 20 acres of land is necessary to support an average family of five members on agriculture.<sup>6</sup> The produce from the land is apt to be very meagre, hardly being able to maintain their rural families for more than four or five months in a year. On the other hand, the village land belonging to the families in Bombay is either not at all under cultivation, or if cultivated, its proceeds go to the ones who cultivate it, the families in Bombay hardly receiving anything by way of a share in their own land. Very rarely it has been reported that they receive a few seers of grain from their land in the native place. The land factor, therefore, for these urban families is not on the whole an important one from an economic point of view. They have to depend entirely on urban occupations.

The landless, and even the land-owning rural families have to resort to agricultural labour on the lands of well-to-do classes, and sometimes to minor trades or crafts in default of employment on land. Their chief source of support, however, is the one forthcoming from the income of some of their members working in Bombay either in factories or in private households. Without this income flowing from the city, which is the mainstay of their existence, the families of these poorest classes of agricultural labour would be on the point of extinction; such are the appalling conditions in their villages, as picturized by the persons in-

5. Carle C. Zimmerman: *Consumption And Standards of Living*, p. 32, 1936.

6. Cf. M. B. Desai: *Op. cit.*, p. 16.



interviewed! As a result of these rural-urban migrations on the part of some of the members, the family tends to become dispersed and it so happens in some cases that some individuals among them having to meet heavy expenses of the city on their own selves, fail to render financial help to the main family and thereby augment its income. Consequently, it becomes all the more difficult to calculate total family earnings on the basis of the number of members in each family, and therefore, such individuals are dropped in working out the number of persons sharing the family income.

However, before we take up the question of total family earnings of the domestic servants, it should be important to consider first the extent to which the wages in domestic service contribute towards family income according as the individuals are the sole, principal or supplementary wage earners in the family.

We see from table 40a, that among men household workers, the greatest number, about 47 per cent are the principal earning members whose average monthly income is Rs. 47.1 which is slightly greater than Rs. 45.7, the average income of those who are the sole earners in their families, and who are 37.5 per cent of the total. We find that those who are supplementary earners among men are only 10 per cent and their average wages are also considerably low, they being only Rs. 25.3 per month. There is a small number of individuals, about 4.6 per cent, who are single cases having no families to support, and their average income is comparatively high, being about Rs. 44.1

On the other hand among the women domestics as shown in table 40b, the largest number of persons, about 55.4 per cent of the total are only supplementary wage earning members in their families and their average wages are Rs. 21.5 per month. But community-wise we find that the Christians differ from the others, for they have the greatest number of persons, about 38.6 per cent who are principal earners. The next largest group of persons, on the whole, are again principal earners whose income is Rs. 33.6 which is slightly higher than Rs. 31.8, the average income of the sole earners who constitute only 15.7 per cent of the total. Here too we have a few individuals, about 7.8 per cent in all, who are solitary cases with no families to support, and their average income is Rs. 24.5.

TABLE 40a

NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO ARE SOLE, PRINCIPAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY EARNERS IN  
THE FAMILY AND THEIR AVERAGE INCOMES

	Christians						Gujeratis				Marathis				All Communities			
	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income
Sole Earners	27	33.7	50.3	28	35.0	58.6	35	43.4	31.9	90	37.5	45.7						
Principal Earners	31	38.8	46.7	48	60.0	55.8	34	42.5	35.6	113	47.0	47.1						
Supplementary Earners	12	15.0	34.9	4	5.0	23.0	10	12.9	14.8	26	10.0	25.3						
Single Cases	10	12.5	44.5	—	—	—	1	1.2	30	11	4.6	44.1						
Total	80	100	45.9	80	100	55.0	80	100	31.3	240	100	44.1						

*Men Domestics*

TABLE 40b

NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO ARE SOLE, PRINCIPAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY EARNERS IN  
THE FAMILY AND THEIR AVERAGE INCOMES

*Women Domestic*

	Christians				Marathis				Gujeratis				All Communities			
	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons	Percentage to the Total	Average Income	No. of Persons
Sole Earners	19	27.1	33.7	7	9.3	40.5	14	12.2	25.6	40	15.7	32.0				
Principal Earners	27	38.6	36.4	9	12.0	42.1	19	16.6	26.0	55	21.1	33.6				
Supplementary Earners	13	20.0	28.3	56	74.7	22.2	74	64.4	19.9	143	55.4	21.5				
Single Cases	11	14.3	27.5	3	4	24.3	8	6.8	20.6	22	7.8	24.5				
Total	70	100	32.7	75	100	26.3	115	100	21.6	260	100	26.0				

From the two tables it is evident that for all the communities in both cases, the average income of the principal earning members is very much higher than that of the supplementary earners. That it is also slightly higher than that of the sole earners is rather a sad story for the latter on whom falls the greatest burden of family maintenance.

With this estimate before us of the effect of wages in domestic service on family earnings according as the individuals under consideration are the sole, principal or supplementary earning members, we turn to the question of the total average earning strength of the families.

Referring to table 41a for men domestics, we find that, on the whole, for all the communities taken together, the average family income per month is Rs. 74.5. However, taking the communities separately, it is the Gujarati families whose average monthly income is the highest, it being Rs. 87.9; that of the Marathis is only Rs. 53.8 on an average, being the lowest on the scale. The Christians have the average family income of Rs. 83.4. Scrutinizing the family income of sole, principal and supplement-

TABLE 41a

DIFFERENT AVERAGE FAMILY INCOMES OF THE SOLE,  
PRINCIPAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY EARNERS

*Men Domestics*

	Average Family Income			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Sole Earners	50.3	58.6	31.9	45.7
Principal Earners	90.6	103.2	69.3	89.5
Supplementary Earners	167.3	116.6	77.5	117.3
All Earners	83.4	87.9	53.8	74.5

tary wage earners, we find that the average family earnings of supplementary wage earners are the highest, they being Rs. 117.3 per month. This is true in all the communities, to a greater or lesser extent. The family earnings of the principal earners are next in proportion, being Rs. 89.5, while those of the sole earners are the lowest of all, only about Rs. 45.7 per month. These are the families whose only source of support is from domestic service and they are the worst sufferers in all the communities concerned more or less.

The average family income of all the women servants as seen in table 41b is Rs. 86.5. The Gujarati families have the highest monthly income of Rs. 94.5, whereas, the Christians have the lowest income of only Rs. 69.8. The average income of the families of Marathi women is Rs. 89.8 per month. Surveying the family income of sole, principal and supplementary earners, we see that the families with the highest monthly income are those of domestics who are supplementary earning members, it being Rs. 110.5. This is so in all the communities taken separately, with minor differences. There is a big drop in the average monthly family income where the individuals in our sample are the prin-

TABLE 41b

DIFFERENT AVERAGE FAMILY INCOMES OF THE SOLE,  
PRINCIPAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY EARNERS

*Women Domestics*

	Average Family Income			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Sole Earners	33.7	40.5	25.6	32.0
Principal Earners	71.2	75.0	51.1	64.8
Supplementary Earners	124.2	105.7	112.0	110.5
All Earners	69.8	94.5	89.8	86.5

cial earning members, for it comes to only Rs. 64.8, while the income becomes almost less than half, i.e., about Rs. 32., in the case of families where the individuals are the only earning members.

It becomes clear, therefore, from the two tables that domestic service as an occupation is tolerable for individuals who pursue it only to supplement their family earnings, but for those who have to depend chiefly or solely upon it for the maintenance of their families it necessitates entirely a sub-standard living. This is borne out by the fact that two Christian and two Marathi families whose monthly income is very low are helped financially by some other more distant relatives.

Since the average family earnings give only the central tendency and thereby obscure variations in earnings of different

TABLE 42a  
DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME

*Men Domestics*

Income Distri- bution		No. of families							
		Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
		Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Below 40	15	22.7	11	13.9	32	40.5	58	25.8	
41 — 60	16	24.2	13	16.4	23	29.1	52	23.2	
61 — 80	14	21.2	25	31.7	11	13.9	50	22.3	
81 — 100	4	6.1	6	7.6	7	8.8	17	7.6	
100 — 150	9	13.6	16	20.2	5	6.3	30	13.4	
151 — 200	5	7.6	6	7.6	—	—	11	4.9	
200 — 300	3	4.5	2	2.5	1	1.2	6	2.7	
TOTAL	66	100	79	100	79	100	224	100	

families, we distribute the families according to different gradations of monthly income.

Turning to our table 42a for this purpose, we find that more than one quarter of the families of men servants have a monthly income below Rs. 40 while about 45.6 per cent of them have an income over Rs. 40 but below Rs. 80 per month. Families with an income over Rs. 200 but less than Rs. 300 are only 2.7 per cent of the total. The Marathis have many more families with an income below 40 than the Christians or the Gujaratis, the former being 40.5 per cent, compared to the 22.7 and 13.9 per cent respectively of the latter. In all cases, therefore, it seems that the Marathi families are the hardest hit.

Among women servants, as shown in table 42b the largest number of families, about 21.3 per cent, have a monthly income

TABLE 42b  
DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME

*Women Domestics*

Income Distri- bution		Number of Families							
		Christians		Marathis		Gujaratis		All Communities	
		Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Below	40	17	28.8	8	10.9	26	24.3	51	21.3
41 —	60	19	32.2	12	16.4	11	10.3	42	17.5
61 —	80	6	10.2	12	16.4	11	10.3	29	12.1
81 —	100	3	5.1	15	20.6	19	17.7	37	15.5
100 —	150	10	16.9	17	23.3	24	22.4	51	21.3
151 —	200	4	6.8	4	5.6	11	10.3	19	7.9
200 —	300	—	—	5	6.8	5	4.7	10	4.2
TOTAL		59	100	73	100	107	100	239	100

below Rs. 40. But then an equally large number have an income between Rs. 101 and Rs. 150, while 4.2 per cent of the families have even more than Rs. 200 as their monthly income. Here the families of Marathi women show a better economic position than those of the Christians or the Gujeratis, for we have about 37.4 per cent of the Marathi families with an income over Rs. 100 compared to 23.7 and 35.7 per cent respectively of the latter.

The above two tables show on the whole, that among men domestic servants, as many as 79 per cent, and women domestic servants, 67 per cent of the families have a monthly income below Rs. 40 a month, which bespeaks the deplorable economic condition of most of the domestic servants in our sample.

At this point it is important to remember that in the case of those who have their families in the villages, indulging in agricultural activities the figures given for monthly family earnings should not be taken to represent exact conditions. Most of the persons interviewed have no detailed account of what the other members of their families earn in the rural areas either in agricultural labour, or in other allied minor trades and occupations, with the result they have given only rough estimates. Moreover, wages in agriculture are very uncertain; for about four or five months in a year there is a great deal of unemployment, with the result, the family earnings undergo an appreciable loss and greater burden is put upon the members in Bombay. Not only that, but very often the wages are received in kind in the form of grain, and wages in kind being difficult to be estimated for their cash value they have been omitted in a computation of family earnings.

Another point to be remembered in a discussion of family earnings of the domestic servants is that the members being scattered in the case of rural families, the total earnings of all the members are never pooled together as it happens when the whole family stays together in one place. The rural family has to depend only on what the earning members in the city can send after deducting their own expenditure. In view of this fact it would be significant to have a rough idea of the average amount of money sent per month by the individuals in our sample, to their families in the villages.



It has been calculated from the replies received that on an average about Rs. 21.2 per individual are sent by the men domestic servants to their native places from an average monthly wage of Rs. 44.1, which means that about 48 per cent of the income from domestic service goes to support the rural families of the men servants. Community-wise, the Gujaratis send the lowest proportion of their income, it being about 46 per cent, whereas the Christians and the Marathis send about 50 per cent of their income to the native place.

Among women servants, the question of sending money to the native place to add to the family income does not arise at all for the Gujaratis and the Marathis whose families are in Bombay. It affects only the Christian women who, on an average, send about Rs. 17.3 out of a wage of Rs. 32.7, which forms 53 per cent of the wage. Whatever money the Gujarati and the Marathi women send to their native places is only by way of helping some other relatives.

It has been reported by many Christian servants both men and women coming from the Portuguese territory in Goa, that, owing to political reasons they experience great difficulties in sending money to their families in the native place for the last three or four years and have to resort to indirect means for con-

TABLE 43a

AVERAGE NUMBER OF COMPLETE DEPENDANTS AND  
EARNING MEMBERS SHARING THE FAMILY INCOME

	<i>Men Domestics</i>			
	Christians	Gujaratis	Marathis	Total
Average No. of complete dependants per family	3.2	4.1	3.9	3.7
Average No. of earning members per family	1.8	2	2.8	2.2
Average No. of members sharing family income	5	6.1	6.7	5.9

veying the money after long intervals of three or four months, with the result, their families live under conditions of great economic strain, often cut off from their only source of support.

For a better appreciation of the economic position of a family, it is necessary to understand the proportion of working members to complete dependants, and the total number of persons sharing the family earnings in each family. Referring to table 43a, we find that on an average, among men servants, there are 5.9 persons sharing the family income; out of these, 2.2 are earning members, and 3.7 are complete dependants per family. Community-wise, it is among the Marathis that we have the largest number of earning members per family, and they are, on an average, 2.8. The Christians have the smallest average of 1.8 earning members in each family. The Gujarati families, on the other hand, have more complete dependants per family than the Christians or the Marathis, they being on an average, 4.1. On the whole there are more dependants on family income than working members in each family, in all the communities taken together.

In the families of women servants, as shown in table 43b, there are on an average 5 members sharing the family income, of whom 2.1 are earning members, and 2.9 complete dependants per family. The Gujaratis have a greater number of persons sha-

TABLE 43b

AVERAGE NUMBER OF COMPLETE DEPENDANTS AND  
EARNING MEMBERS SHARING THE FAMILY INCOME

*Women Domestic*

	Christians	Gujaratis	Marathis	Total
Average No. of complete dependants per family	2.4	3.6	2.7	2.9
Average No. of earning members per family	1.7	2.4	2.2	2.1
Average No. of members sharing family income	4.1	6	4.9	5

ring the family income than the Christians or the Marathis, they being on an average 6, per family. The Christian families have only 1.7 earning members compared to 2.2 among the Marathis and 2.4 among the Gujeratis. The Gujeratis, while they have the largest number of earning members have also the largest number of complete dependants per family; and they are 3.6, while the Christians have the smallest number of dependants, only 2.4 on an average, per family. Among the families of women servants, although there are more dependants than earning members per family in all the communities taken together, the difference between the two is smaller than that between the earning members and dependants in the families of men servants. Also, on an average the women have fewer members per family sharing the family income than the men, there being 5 of the former, compared to 5.9 of the latter. With the average monthly earnings of Rs. 74.5 of the families of men servants, compared to Rs. 86.5 of those of women servants, we may conclude that the families of men servants are economically in a worse situation than those of the women in our sample. This may be because of the fact that men have a majority of their families in the villages while women have a majority of their families in the city with comparatively greater occupational opportunities for the members.

While discussing the question of dependants on family income it should not be forgotten that apart from the regular members living in one's own family who have a claim on the earnings of the earning members, there are, in some instances, a few distant relatives, who, owing to the death of their own bread-earner, or to their extreme economic distress have to be dependant financially, to some extent, on the domestic servants in our sample, a point which was referred to in a previous chapter while discussing family sentiment. Thus we have among men servants, 1 Christian, 1 Gujerati, and 2 Marathis, and among women 8 Christians, and 1 Marathi, who extend a helping hand every month to the families of a dead brother, or a married son or daughter, or even of a mother's brother depending upon the circumstances, tiding over, to some extent, the immediate difficulties of the persons in distress. While computing the average number of dependants per family, this was not taken note of, as the cases are comparatively few, and no exact figures were available to make the necessary

additions. It is sufficient to note here that such instances involve an added strain on the already straitened financial circumstances of the families of our domestic servants.

If the total monthly income of the family is difficult to calculate in the case of working class families owing to the diffusion of the members, and the general instability of the earnings, the family expenditure presents a still greater difficulty by way of calculation. This is especially so in the case of our domestic servants, and men in particular, who stay away from their families and have little or no idea as to how the other members of their families expend their earnings. Even in the case of those persons who stay with their families in the city, no accurate details are kept of the total family expenditure, not to speak of the expenditure on different items, which is so essential for the study of the standard of living of the given class of workers. Besides, the urban families buy most of the food-grains on credit from the local grocers, the payments on which are deferred for several months, with the result, it is difficult to estimate whether these should be considered as expenditure or as family debt. The figures given by these persons, therefore, only roughly indicate the tendencies in incurring expenditure. No details are available in the case of those workers staying away from their families; only

TABLE 44a

AVERAGE MONTHLY FAMILY EXPENDITURE COMPARED  
WITH AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME

*Men Domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
No. of families	19	12	8	39
Average income per month	89.9	75.8	101.5	87.9
Average expenditure per month	94.5	86.6	109.4	95.1

the monthly expenditure on their own selves was possible to obtain. In view of this, it would be in the fitness of things that we studied separately the family expenditures of those who could give any rough estimate, and personal expenditures of those who could not.

Table 44a shows that among men servants we have data for family expenditure of only 39 families. The average monthly expenditure works out to be Rs. 95.1 compared to an income of Rs. 87.9 for these 39 families. We find that in all the communities taken separately the average expenditure exceeds the income of the family to a greater or lesser extent. It is however, among the Gujarati families that there is a broader margin between income and expenditure than that among the Christian or the Marathi families.

We have comparatively more sufficient data for the families of women servants, for, there are 193 families whose monthly expenditure could be obtained, as seen in table 44b. The average monthly expenditure of these families is Rs. 105.5 compared to an average monthly income of Rs. 91.9. Here the difference between income and expenditure is on the whole greater than that for the families of men domestics, which is seen in all the communities. It is greatest among families of Gujarati women.

TABLE 44b  
AVERAGE MONTHLY FAMILY EXPENDITURE COMPARED  
WITH AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME

	<i>Women Domestics</i>			
	Christians	Gujaratis	Marathis	All Communities
No. of families	15	72	106	193
Average income per month	83.8	94.5	89.8	91.9
Average expenditure per month	96.6	116.5	99.8	105.5

Both the tables show one significant thing that in all cases the expenditure exceeds the income in a greater or lesser degree, which indicates the inadequacy of the average monthly income of the families of the domestic servants in our sample. It is also a pointer to the great necessity of incurring debts for these families which will be discussed later.

As we said before, a large number of servants, owing to the exigencies of occupation stay away from their families and incur personal expense on their own selves after remitting a certain amount from their wages to meet the needs of the families; while there are some others who are lonely individuals with no families of their own. It would be significant, therefore, to see how much

TABLE 45a

## MONTHLY EXPENDITURE INCURRED ON SELF

Men Domestic

	<i>Expenditure On Self with Meals At Place of Service</i>			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Com- munities
Number of persons	47	24	56	127
Average expenditure in Rs.	16.5	10.8	8.1	11.8
	<i>Expenditure On Self without Meals At Place of Service</i>			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Com- munities
Number of persons	14	44	15	73
Average expenditure in Rs.	42.8	34.7	26.1	34.5

expenditure these persons incur on themselves per month. For this purpose we separate the expenditure of those who receive boarding amenities at their place of service from that of others who do not enjoy such amenities.

We see in table 45a that as many as 200 persons, i.e., 93.3 per cent of men servants incur individual expense; of these, 127, or 52.9 per cent receive meals at place of service and 73 persons, or 30.4 per cent do not receive meals. The average monthly expenditure of those receiving meals is only Rs. 11.8. per individual. Community-wise, it is the Christians who spend the largest amount on themselves, which is on an average Rs. 16.5, whereas, the Marathis are the most frugal of the lot, spending only about Rs. 8 on an average. The monthly expenditure of those not receiving meals at their employers' houses is naturally much higher, being Rs. 34.5 for all the communities. Here also the Christians spend the most, their average being Rs. 42.8, compared to Rs. 26.1 of the Marathis, who spend the least. In both cases, the Gujaratis stand between the two so far as personal expenditure is concerned. The table shows that on the whole the expenditure becomes more than thrice as much for each individual, on an average, when meals are not provided at the place of service, with the result very little is left to these individuals to send home to their families, although the average wages are slightly higher in their case compared to those of others who receive board at the place of service. Much of their wage, however, is absorbed in food only. The domestic servants suffer both ways. When they receive meals, their wages are low, when they do not receive meals, their wages, though comparatively high, are largely expended on food, with the result, they can send only half or even less than half their earnings on an average to other members of the family dependent on them.

Among women we have only 67 persons, i.e., 25.7 per cent of the total who incur personal expenditure on their own selves, of whom a large majority are Christians, as seen in table 45b. Of these, 50 persons, or 15.3 per cent are recipients of meals at their employers' houses while only about 17, or 10.4 per cent are not recipients of meals. The average monthly expenditure of the former is Rs. 12.9 compared to Rs. 31.6, the average expenditure of the latter. Among the Gujaratis, there are no women

receiving two meals a day. Here too, on the whole in both cases, the Christians spend the most and the Marathi women the least on themselves.

Those domestic servants, who receive boarding and other amenities at their place of service have only sundries and other minor items to spend money on, which include expense on smoke, pan, tobacco, laundry charges, toilet articles, and on some leisure activities like visiting films etc. At times, especially in the case of younger servants, we do come across some instances, where an employer bears, atleast partially, the burden of some of these items of expenditure, which leaves the servant some scope for saving up a few extra coins.

TABLE 45b

## MONTHLY EXPENDITURE INCURRED ON SELF

*Women Domestic*

<i>Expenditure On Self with Meals At Place of Service</i>				
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Number of persons	49	—	1	50
Average expenditure in Rs.	13	—	10	12.9
<i>Expenditure On Self without Meals At Place of Service</i>				
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Number of persons	6	4	7	17
Average expenditure in Rs.	36.6	30	28.2	31.6



This gives rise to the question whether the domestic servants do save any money out of their earnings or not. Most of the individuals in our sample laughed out the question, when they were asked whether they had been able to make any savings, and in the context of their over-all economic condition, we do acknowledge the incongruity of such a question. Hence the difficulty in formulating any tables on the subject. However, there is only one Gujerati man servant who has admitted having a life insurance policy of his own which is his only means of saving, some money. On the other hand, there are quite a few individuals in our sample, especially the unmarried ones and those who incur expense only on self, who have stated that they can put away Rs. 5 to 10 from their wages every month. This money, however, does not constitute their life savings, for no sooner, a big necessity arises, than they have to draw upon those resources which soon get exhausted. The main item which drains away, their savings is the necessity of making clothes twice or thrice a year. Expenses on important festivals, on sickness, on visits to native place, and on meeting the demands of some family emergency are among the factors calling for their small savings which are hardly adequate for these needs.

An interesting method of saving money was brought to notice from among some Christian servants in our sample. Usually an elderly, responsible person, known to all, is selected to whom the servants deposit every month the small amount of money that they can save. He keeps detailed accounts of the money thus received from each individual, acting as a sort of a bank. Whenever any one of them is in need of money he can draw any amount he requires, even exceeding that which he has deposited, for which he has to pay an interest of half to one anna in a rupee per month (i.e., from Rs. 40 to 75 per cent per annum)!

Anyway, it is a very small proportion of the servant population that can effect even such kind of savings. For a large majority of them with heavy family responsibility this is impossible, and instead of saving even a penny, they have to run into monthly debts to meet the family expenses, as the previous tables clearly showed that the monthly expenditures, on an average, always exceed the family earnings, save in a few cases.

Debt is a ubiquitous feature in the economy of agricultural labour and working class families in India, and our domestic servants, drawn from these classes, are not exempt from it either. In order to make both ends meet they are obliged to incur debts almost every month which are never really repaid. For the circle is a vicious one; they repay in the beginning of the month when they receive their wages, the debts of the previous month; by the time the month draws to its close, they find themselves short of money and again resort to the money-lender and the thing goes on and on like that till there is no end to their indebtedness. Along with the occasional debts, some of the families have heavy standing debts incurred for some reason or the other; and the interest paid on these debts year in and year out always far exceeds the original figure only because the family cannot afford to pay off such a debt in a lump sum. Sometimes, as the servants have themselves said, they borrow from a new agent only to pay back to an old one whose demands become intolerable.

It would be important therefore, to enquire what proportion of the families of the individuals in our sample have a standing debt, apart from the usual smaller debts they incur now and again. As indicated by table 46a, about 16.6 per cent of the total

TABLE 46a

THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES HAVING A STANDING DEBT  
AND THE AMOUNT OF AVERAGE DEBT

*Men domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
No. of families having a stand- ing debt	14	13	13	40
Percentage to the total	17.6	16.3	16.3	16.6
Total amount of debt	8325	6700	4150	19175
Average debt	594.5	515.4	319.2	479.3

families of men domestics have a standing debt on an average of Rs. 479.3. The Christians show a slightly higher incidence of indebtedness, for there are 17.6 per cent of their families compared to the 16.3 per cent each, of those of the Marathis and the Gujeratis, who are in debt. Also, the average debt of the Christians is the highest, it being Rs. 594.5, whereas, the Marathis have the lowest average debt of Rs. 319.2 per family.

Among women domestics as shown in table 46b about 15.4 per cent of the families have a standing debt. The Christians, again, have the highest incidence of about 21.6 per cent of the families in debt. On the other hand only 8 per cent of the Gujerati families have a debt. The average debt for all women is Rs. 476.3, with the Gujerati families having the highest average of Rs. 575. The Marathis have the lowest standing debt of Rs. 443.7 per family.

The reasons for indebtedness cited by these persons are inadequate income, sickness or death in family, wedding in family, unemployment, for sending to native place, for buying land, for house repairs, for education of children, etc. There is also one instance where the debt is the debt of deceased parents. The lar-

TABLE 46b

THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES HAVING A STANDING DEBT  
AND THE AMOUNT OF AVERAGE DEBT

	<i>Women domestics</i>			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
No. of families having a stand- ing debt	15	6	19	40
Percentage to the total	21.6	8	16.6	15.4
Total amount of debt	7175	3450	8439	19055
Average debt	478.3	575	443.7	476.3

gest number of persons among men servants, that is, 37.5 per cent of those in debt, have given wedding of a family member as the chief reason for debt, and about 17.5 per cent are in debt owing to their own wedding. Among women also, the largest number of persons, about 30 per cent, are in debt owing to wedding in the family, a fact which shows that weddings can hardly take place among this class of workers without going into debt. 17.5 per cent of the women in debt, have given inadequacy of the income as a reason, while about 30 per cent have incurred debts owing to own sickness, or to sickness or death of a family member. That one Marathi woman has incurred debt for the education of her children is an interesting feature pointing to the growing importance attached to education at the present moment among the lower classes.

Apart from having a standing debt, a large number of persons incur occasional debts ranging from once every month, to once in six months. From our sample about 62 per cent of the men servants incur such occasional debts in Bombay. Only 38 per cent do not go in for debts over here. All the same, their families in the villages have to incur frequent debts of which they themselves can give no account. The greatest incidence of occasional indebtedness is among the Gujaratis who have 78.5 per cent among them incurring such debts.

As many as 78.5 per cent of women domestics have said that they have to incur occasional debts. We have found that among the Christian women the incidence of this kind of indebtedness is the lowest, only 58.9 per cent admitting it. This may be because most of the families of Christian women are in the native places, and the individuals interviewed could give no definite replies as to their families incurring occasional debts. On the other hand, this incidence is the highest among Gujarati women, where about 92 per cent of the women have admitted having to incur frequent debts for their families which are all in Bombay.

For those who borrow money frequently in Bombay the amount varies from Rs. 2 to over Rs. 100. The usual amount borrowed by men seems to be Rs. 10 to 15 as given by about 25.5 per cent of the individuals. 22.6 per cent have said that they incur a debt of only Rs. 5 to 10, while another 21.3 per cent take about Rs. 15 to 20. The numbers diminish considerably as

the amount increases after Rs. 20, for, comparatively very few persons incur a debt of more than Rs. 20 any time they do incur one for consumption purposes.

The women, on the other hand, have given a higher usual figure for borrowing than that given by the men; for, the largest number, as many as 26 per cent have to take Rs. 20 to 30 when they incur debts. This incidence has been observed uniformly in all the communities taken separately. Also, there are more persons here whose occasional debts rise from Rs. 30 even as far as Rs. 100, than among men. Again, this phenomenon may be explained by the fact that among women servants, a much larger number of their families are residents of the city than those among men, and therefore the larger amounts borrowed by women are more for family purposes than for personal use, as is the case with many of our men servants, though of course, some of the latter also borrow money here for sending it to their native places.

At what intervals do the domestic servants borrow money to meet their usual needs? The majority of persons among men, i.e., 42 per cent of them, have to borrow regularly every month, which attests to the inadequacy of the wages in their occupation which perforce lands them into such frequent debts. The others borrow occasionally or at slightly longer intervals. For women the situation is even worse because 82 per cent of them have said that they have to borrow every month. This is difficult to explain owing to the fact that a large number of women are only supplementary wage earners in their families, and the family income in their case does not rest solely, or even chiefly, on their earnings. If, in spite of the fact that many of them have other members of family who are the principal wage earners, they have to incur monthly debts, it only shows that the over-all family income of this class of workers is insufficient to support their families. Insufficiency of income is the chief reason, cited by a large majority of persons, for incurring debts. Where there is a sickness in the family, or when children are to be educated, or when clothes are to be made they have almost always to resort to borrowing. Again, the unemployment of a principal wage-earner puts excessive strain on the economic resources of the family which could only be mitigated by knocking at the door of the money-lender. If money is not borrowed, then grain and other groceries are taken

on credit from the local Bania, the payments on which are deferred for several months.

One reason for not incurring debts, given by some persons, is not a sufficient income, but inability to repay the debts and to pay exorbitant sums of interest on them. Those persons have said that they prefer living on the verge of starvation to implicating themselves into debts. Forcibly missing a meal a day is, therefore, not an uncommon feature in the life of some of these individuals.

From whom do the domestic servants borrow money? Various lending agencies were named when the servants were asked this question, among them being friends, neighbours and relatives, Marwaris, Banias, and other professional money-lenders, communal funds and sometimes even employers. The largest number of men servants in all communities, about 74 per cent of the total, seek financial help from their own friends and relatives only. Only about 13.2 per cent resort to professional money-lenders while the rest borrow from employers or communal funds, or any other miscellaneous agency. Among women servants also, the largest number, about 50.5 per cent borrow from friends and relatives. Here we have more persons, about 27.6 per cent in all, who go to professional money-lenders to borrow money. The rest borrow from employers, communal funds, or from any of the above mentioned agents, at one time or the other. The number of persons borrowing from employers is found to be very small, there being only 4.4 per cent of men, and 6.6 per cent of women, which may mean that it is difficult for middle-class employers to lend out money to their servants, for, owing to a lack of mutual trust, there is always the fear of the latter absconding with the money. There is, however, one advantage for those servants who can borrow from their employers, and that is, they have not to pay interest on the money borrowed, for no master could be so niggardly as to take interest from his own servant. To other agents, however, large sums of interest have to be paid ranging from two pice to four annas in a rupee per month as the case may be. Sometimes friends and relatives also forgo the interest but not in all instances. But on the whole several persons in our sample have stated that they do not have to pay interest for the money borrowed, except when it is borrowed from the professional money-lenders.

An account of the economic condition of the domestic servants and their families, therefore, projects a picture of distressing poverty in the class. An occupation, which, according to popular belief could be taken up by anyone, needing neither special training nor any special skill, naturally offers a low rate of remuneration; and where remuneration falls to the bottom level, then poverty is not far off. Where income is not adequate to meet the needs of the individuals and families, where expenditure most often exceeds income, where no regular savings are effected, where debt is continually resorted to, and where insecurity of conditions prevails, with the spectre of unemployment always looming large, we cannot expect a situation for a large majority of families any better than that of the manifestation of abject poverty — *an almost hand to mouth existence*.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EDUCATIONAL STATUS

*"Educate and inform the whole mass of people. They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of liberty."*

—THOMAS JEFFERSON

TO STRESS the importance of education for the working classes would be to re-echo the oft-repeated cry of economists, educationists, and social reformers of the present times to educate all sections of the masses for a greater participation in the ways of a democratic society, and for a surer improvement of their standard of living. Gone are the days when education for the poorer labouring classes was considered a waste of time, detrimental to their morals and happiness, rendering them discontented with their lot and teaching them insubordination instead of making them good servants in all forms of laborious employments. The growth of a complex industrial society, and the expansion of population have revealed the ignorance of the fast increasing working classes all over the world, which are required to be educated for a safe working of a democracy "which demands of all the people the responsibility of a full membership of society".<sup>1</sup> It has become increasingly evident in education, as Margaret Cole points out, that, "the labour force of the new world must be trained, intelligent, as well as healthy; it must have acquired the knowledge to live and work in modern surroundings, the skill of the type required to operate modern industry, and the capacity to make of itself a whole person, knowing and appreciating what it is about in life".<sup>2</sup>

Ignorance and superstition are the deadliest enemies of the workers leading them ultimately to disillusionment, frustration

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1. Ottaway A.K.C. *Education And Society*, London 1953. p. 80.

2. Margaret Cole: *Education For Democracy*, London 1942. p. 13.



and consequent exploitation. And hence the great need for instruction and enlightenment of the masses. "An instructed and intelligent people besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one", wrote Adam Smith. "They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors".<sup>3</sup>

Education for the working classes is not only a matter of vital necessity for the structure and functioning of a civilized community but it is also demanded by the economic factors of modern life. It is true that the primary aim of education is not essentially economic in character, for its main purpose is to develop character and personality, but it does infuse the workers with the best hope of insuring economic improvement. An intelligent co-operation of individuals is always important in all economic activities, and all the cry for factory legislation and the demand for improving the conditions of the labourers would be futile if the whole thing was meant to be administered for those who cannot understand nor appreciate the regulations by which they are to profit. Stressing the importance of education for the workers, in connection with this, Charles Booth wrote that, "The most valuable external influences, however, are not those which control the individual, but those which enable him to act more freely and more intelligently for himself. In this respect, above all, we recognize the fundamental importance of education as an instrument of industrial reform".<sup>4</sup>

The need for education for the workers brings up the question of opportunity for education. It is a recognized fact that economic and environmental conditions play a large part in the social distribution of educational opportunity. Extremes of poverty among the lower sections of the labouring population remain a grave impediment in the path of those who seek to improve their standard and status, in other words, to move up in the social scale where life perhaps would be less arduous. Thus, lack of educational opportunity, which is one of the causes of poverty, is also one of its consequences. The material environ-

3. Adam Smith: *Wealth Of Nations*, (Cannan's edition) Book V, p. 270.

4. Charles Booth. Op. cit. Second Series, Vol. V., p. 296.

ment of the individual from a poor home, which includes inadequate family income, usually large size of the family, poor and overcrowded housing conditions, lack of living space, along with the cultural environment which involves lack of interest, and indifference towards education characteristic of the lower class family, are factors accounting for sheer inability to avail oneself of the educational opportunity.

The previous discussions in this study have revealed that the story of the domestic servants, as one important section of the working population, is a story of poverty with its attendant ills and failings. Any enquiry into the educational attainments of the domestic workers, therefore, must necessarily be in the light of these conditions.

Of prime importance for the question of education for the poorer classes, is the question of literacy, for there is generally a close association between poverty and illiteracy especially in an under-developed country like India where there is a very high percentage of mass illiteracy. Although the acquisition of literacy is not the same thing as educational achievement, it must not be forgotten that literacy sets the gear for further education. As R. V. Parulekar has emphasised, "Literacy is the foundation on which the structure of education is mainly built".<sup>5</sup> In other words, the ability to read and write is the first essential step towards acquiring education. Let us then first see the position as regards literacy among the domestic servants in our sample.

Referring to our table 47a for the purpose, we find that among men domestics, the proportion of literates is very high, which is unexpected in a group like that of domestic servants. 63.3 per cent of the individuals have reported themselves as being able to read and write. The incidence of literacy is highest among the Gujarati men servants, for, we have as many as 72.5 per cent literates among them. The Christians have 69 per cent of literate individuals, while the Marathis have only 47.5 per cent of them. Between the literate and the illiterate persons in our sample there is also an intermediate class who can, with some

5. R. V. Parulekar: *Literacy In India*, London, 1939, p. 138.

TABLE 47a

PROPORTION OF LITERATE AND ILLITERATE  
EMPLOYEES AMONG*Men domestics*

	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Literate	55	69	58	72.5	38	47.5	151	63.3
Those who can only sign their names	2	2.5	4	5	9	11.2	15	6.3
Those who can sign their names and can read	4	5	1	1.2	—	—	5	2.1
Illiterate	19	23.5	17	21.3	33	41.3	69	28.3
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

difficulty only sign their names, or sign their names and also read, but cannot write. This according to the 1941 Census definition is considered as "partial literacy". Of such individuals we have 6.3 per cent who can only sign their names, and 2.1 per cent who can sign their names and also read. 28.3 per cent of men are totally illiterate.

The incidence of literacy falls considerably low when we study table 47b for women domestics. Here we have as many as 80.8 per cent of women who are completely illiterate and only 14.6 per cent who are literate. It is among the Christians that we have the highest number of literate women, they being 27.2

TABLE 47b

PROPORTION OF LITERATE AND ILLITERATE  
EMPLOYEES AMONG

*Women domestics*

	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Literate	19	27.2	10	13.4	9	7.8	38	14.6
Those who can only sign their names	2	2.8	1	1.3	1	.8	4	1.5
Those who can sign their names and can read	5	7.1	2	2.6	1	.8	8	3.1
Illiterate	44	63	62	82.5	104	90.5	210	80.8
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

per cent of the total, while the Marathis have barely 7.8 per cent literate individuals. The Gujarati group stands mid-way between the two with 13.4 per cent of literates. As for partial literates, 1.5 per cent can only sign their names, while 3.1 per cent can sign their names as well as read.

Comparing the literacy percentage among the domestic servants under survey with all-India figures from the last Census of 1951, we find that the former stand in a very favourable position. For instance, we have 63.3 per cent men servants who are literate compared with only 29.6 per cent literate men all over India.

and 14.6 per cent literate women servants as against 9.3 per cent literate women all over India. The combined literacy for men and women in our sample is 37.8 per cent, whereas, that for the whole of India is only about 19.9 per cent based on figures shown in the Census of 1951.<sup>6</sup> It is a matter of great satisfaction for the observer that our domestic servants are not a mass of completely illiterate persons, as is generally expected, compared with the other sections of the population.

A percentage distribution of literate persons in different age-groups is also worth considering owing to the fact that the age of the individual has a bearing on literacy in view of the progress made in the country towards mass literacy in recent times. Table 48a designed for the purpose shows that among men domestic servants there are not wide differences in literacy percentages in the three age-groups, below 20, 21 to 30, and above 30. In fact there is almost an equal literacy percentage of 60.8, and 60.9 in the age-groups below 20 and above 30 respectively which fact is difficult to comprehend. The percentage is slightly higher, about 68.2, in the middle age-group of 21 to 30. Except in the Christian community, the percentage of literacy is highest in the lowest age-group of below 20, and lowest in the highest age-group of

TABLE 48a

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LITERACY IN DIFFERENT AGE-GROUPS

*Men domestics*

Age-group	Percentage of Literates			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Below 20	66.6	85.7	55.2	60.8
21 — 30	77.7	73.3	54.2	68.2
Above 30	63.8	70.7	22.2	60.9

6. Cf. *Education In India*, Ministry of Education, Government of India, pp. 16-17.

above 30. The Marathis show a considerable drop to only 22.2 per cent of literates in the highest age-group. It is among the Christians that we find a slight discrepancy. Here we have the largest number of literates, about 77.7 per cent, in the middle age-group of 21 to 30 contrary to what is normally expected. Anyway, the high literacy percentages in the highest age-group among the Christians and the Gujeratis is something quite commendable.

The table 48b for women domestics shows greater regularity. Here there is a significant rise in literacy as we go from the highest to the lowest age-group according to the normal expectancy. There are 38.8 per cent literates in the age-group below 20 compared to only 6.5 per cent literates in the age-group above 30. One thing which is rather puzzling in the table is that, whereas, among Gujerati women there are 100 per cent literates in the age-group below 20, among the Marathis, the percentage is zero in this age-group. This may be due to a deficiency of numbers in the two communities in this age-group.

Closely associated with the question of literacy is the duration of school attendance with reference to the class upto which the individual has studied. It is here that we shall find the real influence of social class position on school attendance. "Occupation

TABLE 48b

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LITERACY IN DIFFERENT AGE-GROUPS

*Women domestics*

Age-group	Percentage of Literates			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Below 20	55.5	100	0	38.8
21 — 30	42.8	23.5	19.3	23.6
Above 30	13.3	3.7	4.3	6.5

TABLE 49a

THE NUMBER OF PERSONS EDUCATED UPTO VARIOUS  
STANDARDS OF VERNACULAR AND ENGLISH

*Men domestics*

Standard completed		Number of Persons Educated							
		Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
		Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Vernacular									
Std. I	6	7.5	3	3.7	7	8.7	16	6.8	
„ II	6	7.5	11	13.8	9	11.3	26	10.8	
„ III	18	22.5	16	20	8	10	42	17.4	
„ IV	10	12.5	16	20	11	13.8	37	15.4	
„ V	8	10	1	1.2	3	3.7	12	5	
„ VI	3	3.7	4	5	1	1.2	8	3.3	
„ VII	1	1.2	—	—	1	1.2	2	.8	
„ VIII	1	1.2	—	—	—	—	1	.4	
English									
Std. II	1	1.2	—	—	1	1.2	2	.8	
„ V	1	1.2	1	1.2	—	—	2	.8	
Attended school for less than one year									
	4	5	2	2.5	4	5	10	4.2	
Attended Church or Salvation Army school									
	6	7.5	1	1.2	—	—	7	2.9	
Educated at home									
	2	2.5	10	12.5	4	5	16	6.8	
Never attended school									
	13	16.3	15	18.8	31	39	59	24.5	
Total		80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

tion, amount and source of income, residential area, self-evaluation of social class, and various symbols of class are all related to the level of educational attendance", as pointed out by Wilbur Brookover and collaborators.<sup>7</sup> Bearing this factor in mind we should not be expecting a high educational attendance on an average among the domestic servants in our sample. And our tables meet with our expectations. We find in table 49a, not considering the 24.5 per cent of men domestics who never attended school, the largest number, about 17.4 per cent studied only uptill the standard third vernacular, and the next largest group, 15.4 per cent completed standard fourth vernacular. Another 10.8 per cent left school after standard second vernacular. After the fourth standard there is a considerable drop in numbers. There are four persons in our sample, however, who have even studied upto English standards, two of whom upto standard second and the other two upto standard fifth! Of the rest, some attended school for less than one year and some attended church or parochial schools in the villages where there are no regular standards with definite curriculums. It is significant to note that 6.8 per cent of the men servants have stated that they acquired literacy at home by self-study or by help given by some kindly friend or even an employer! On the whole we find the greatest concentration of students leaving school, between the second and the fourth standards of vernacular in the domestic servant class.

The table 49b for women domestics shows identical tendencies. Barring the 70.5 per cent of women who never attended school we have the largest number of individuals having left school before or immediately after completing the fourth vernacular. Here there is no one who has gone upto any English standards, while three persons studied at home. Others, either attended school for less than one year, or attended some church school in the village for a year or two.

It is important to note here that school attendance for any length of period need not necessarily imply literacy nor non-attendance should imply illiteracy. We have quite a few individuals in our sample who have forgotten to read and write even

7. Wilbur B. Brookover and others: *A Sociology Of Education*, New York, 1955, p. 85.



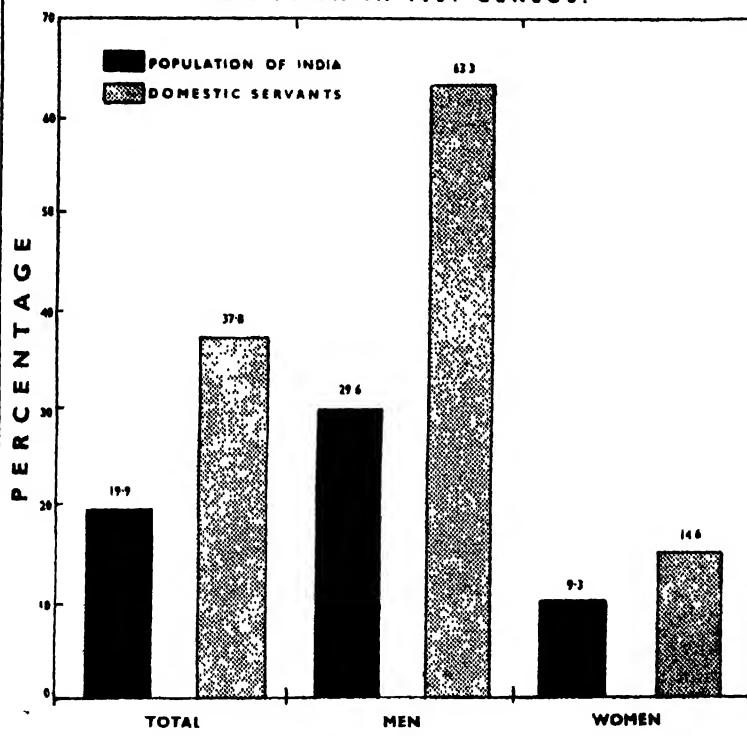
TABLE 49b

THE NUMBER OF PERSONS EDUCATED UPTO VARIOUS  
STANDARDS OF VERNACULAR AND ENGLISH

*Women domestics*

Standard completed	Number of Persons Educated							
	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Vernacular								
Std. I	5	7.1	4	5.3	6	5.2	15	5.8
„ II	2	2.9	—	—	3	2.6	5	1.9
„ III	7	10	5	6.7	3	2.6	15	5.8
„ IV	8	11.4	4	5.3	5	4.4	17	6.6
„ V	1	1.4	1	1.3	1	.8	3	1.1
„ VI	—	—	—	—	1	.8	1	.4
„ VII	1	1.4	—	—	1	.8	2	.8
„ VIII	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.4
Attended school for less than one year	8	11.4	1	1.3	5	4.4	14	5.4
Attended Church school	1	1.4	—	—	—	—	1	.4
Educated at home	2	2.9	1	1.3	—	—	3	1.1
Never attended school	34	49	59	78.6	90	78.2	183	70.5
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100

**PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY AMONG DOMESTIC SERVANTS  
COMPARED WITH THAT OF POPULATION OF INDIA  
AS SHOWN IN 1951 CENSUS.**





after two to four classes of school attendance. These are the individuals who had either not fully acquired literacy or have relapsed into illiteracy, being not at all in touch with reading and writing since the day they left school. On the other hand, there are also some individuals who have admitted an ability to read and write even though they studied only upto standard first. This is difficult to comprehend. It could only be explained by grouping these persons along with those others who are self-taught at home, as having acquired and continued to practice the art of reading and writing even after leaving school at a very tender age. There is also a happy instance in our sample of a Marathi man servant still attending a night school after working hours. He is only 19 years old and is married and has a fairly large joint family of 8 persons to support, along with another earning brother. Two rupees a month he pays for his fees for education out of a monthly wage of Rs. 30! Here is a fine testimony to the still smouldering embers of ambition for education in at least one among a whole sample of 500 individuals.

It is also heartening to note that a small number of individuals who never attended school acquired literacy in the households of their employers. *This is a credit to a function of domestic service as an occupation.* At this point it would be of interest to refer to the authors of the "Vanishing Servant And the Contemporary Status System Of The American South," who, while discussing the education and the acculturation of the Negro domestic servant in the white homes emphasise that, "it would be churlish to overlook the function of domestic service as an educational medium."<sup>8</sup>

That household employment could be utilized as one of the mediums for spreading mass literacy is borne out by a successful experiment carried out in China in the nineteen twenties, a fact which was revealed by Dr. Ping Ling in his address at the World Education Conference held at Edinburgh in 1925.<sup>9</sup> Families employing maids or servants were held responsible for teaching them to read and write within four months, if the servants were illite-

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8. C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Jean Bowman: op. cit. p. 215.

9. cf. Parulekar R. V: *Literacy In India* pp. 145-147 who gives a detailed account of the address of Dr. Ping Ling printed on pp. 639-647 of Volume II of the Report of the Conference.

rate. "The master of the house is responsible for educating his servants" said Dr. Ping Ling. "Also we have a travelling teacher who goes round to collect those servants from the different houses at certain hours of the day, from four to five or three to four. This travelling teacher after school hours will go and collect them in a certain family or a certain place by arrangement, and then he will begin to teach a class of 20 or 30, and no teacher is allowed to quit his job until he has finished it . . . we say to the families, 'you should not employ illiterates in your families. If you already employ them you must make them able to read and write'".<sup>10</sup> Here is indeed an eye-opener to India if she wishes to make mass literacy a fact, as one of the means for reaching the goal by bringing pressure both on the illiterate workers on the hand, and on the household employers on the other!

Going back to the question of school attendance, after this

TABLE 50a

DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS LEAVING SCHOOL AT DIFFERENT AGES AND AVERAGE AGE AT LEAVING SCHOOL

*Men Domestics*

Average Age At Leaving School	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	13.7 years		12.2 years		12.1 years		12.7 years	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Below 10	2	3.3	7	12.9	4	10.8	13	8.6
10 — 12	21	35.0	24	44.4	18	48.6	63	41.8
13 — 15	20	33.3	17	31.4	14	37.8	51	33.7
16 — 18	17	28.3	6	11.1	1	2.7	24	15.9
Total	60	100	54	100	37	100	151	100

10. Ibid. pp. 146-147.

small digression from the point, we seek to enquire into the average age at which the individuals in our sample left school. We find in the table 50a that the average age for leaving school for men domestics is 12.7 years. It is highest for the Christians, 13.7 years, and lowest for the Marathis, 12.1 years. The table also shows the distribution of persons leaving school at different ages. The largest number of persons, about 41.8 per cent, had left school between the ages of 10 and 12, and about 33.7 per cent left at an age between 13 and 15. The Christians have a significant number of persons, 28.3 per cent of the total, who left at a slightly higher age, between 16 and 18. A small number, 8.6 per cent of the total, dropped out of school very early, even before they reached the age of ten.

The age-group 10 to 12 is the usual one when the largest number of women also, about 43.4 per cent, left school as seen in the next table 50b. But here a very large proportion, next in size, about 33.3 per cent, gave up schooling even before they were

TABLE 50b

DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS LEAVING SCHOOL AT DIFFERENT AGES AND AVERAGE AGE AT LEAVING SCHOOL

*Women Domestics*

Average Age At Leaving School	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	10.5 years		11 years		11.2 years		10.8 years	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Below 10	12	36.2	3	25.0	5	33.3	20	33.3
10 — 12	14	42.6	6	50.0	6	40.1	26	43.4
13 — 15	7	21.2	3	25.0	2	13.3	12	20.0
16 — 18	—	—	—	—	2	13.3	2	3.3
Total	33	100	12,	100	15	100	60	100

10, whereas, only about 20 per cent attended school uptill the age of about 15. It is rather surprising to note that there are 2 women who were in school as late as 16 and 18 and they are both from the Marathi group. These are indeed rare cases particularly in this class of people. Anyway, a higher age at leaving school among these people does not necessarily imply long years of school attendance and therefore acquisition of more education because a large number of persons in the lower classes enter school at a comparatively late age, even as late as 10 and 11 years, unlike the children of other higher sections of the population, and hence the late age for leaving school in very many cases. On the whole we find from our tables that very few persons remained in school after 15, most of them had dropped out usually before the age of 12; and we have also seen before that after the fourth vernacular standard the numbers in school attendance drop considerably.

85.7 per cent of the total men and women in our sample dropped out from school before reaching the fifth vernacular standard which presents the problem of early leaving and considerable wastage at the elementary level in the class under consideration. We also find that there is not a single individual who has completed schooling in accordance with the required standards. This could only be explained by enquiring into the reasons for premature school leaving, which would also include reasons for total non-attendance in any school, for a significant number of individuals.

Among the reasons cited by these individuals for interrupting education at an early stage, or for obtaining no education at all, are, financial difficulty, sickness or loss of one or both parents, demands for work either on land in the villages or in the city, lack of intelligence and interest for education, absence of school, or long distance of school from home in the villages, no further standards in school, bad treatment and beatings from the school-teacher, failure in examination, lure of the city of Bombay, own marriage, lack of importance attached to education in former times, custom forbidding girls to acquire education in the lower classes, and household work in case of girls. It is to be noted here that although the reasons are many and varied, most of them are direct or indirect implications of poverty in this class of workers.

35 per cent of the men and over 15 per cent of the women have given directly, lack of finances as the chief reason for leaving or not having attended school which implies that the inadequacy of the economic resources of the family is a major factor in determining educational attendance of the individual which is also the general observation of many other students of the subject.<sup>11</sup> Again, 21.7 per cent of the men servants, and 13 per cent women servants have stated that their educational opportunities were hampered owing to sickness or loss of one or both parents which in many cases implied orphanhood at an early age and therefore work. A child from a poor home who is already at a disadvantage, finds added difficulty in obtaining education when confronted with the loss of parents, finding himself at the mercy of none too kindly relatives who would take a much lesser interest in his mental development.

When more than 20 per cent men and 6 per cent women had to give up or forgo education at a pre-mature age for attending to work in the rural areas or for seeking employment in the city, we have another indication of the economic factor working detrimentally towards the individual's chances for education. It is one of the characteristics of the poorer classes of society that owing to great economic stress, as soon as the child reaches an age when he could be of economic help to the household, he has to leave school; in other words this means that the parents from the poor homes cannot afford to forgo adolescent earnings. This receives added impetus from the attractions offered by local opportunities for employment. In the villages, for instance, the child is employed on minor agricultural operations during the peak seasons to add to the family earnings, or is required to look after the animals which the family may happen to possess. If work is not adequate in the rural areas, the child is very often sent to the city with some relative in search of some form of employment as 14.8 per cent of our men servants have stated from their own experiences. Here it would be significant to take note of Booth when he remarked that, "The thousand opportunities for earning

11. Cf. Brookover W. B. and others: *op. cit* pp 84-98. Also W. Lloyd Warner and others in *Social Class in America*, pp. 169-175; and J. E. Floud and others in *Social Class And Educational Opportunity* pp. 139-149.



precarious livelihoods presented by great centres of population are an evil peculiarity; a source of demoralization for all who come within their influence most especially the young.”<sup>12</sup> Domestic service is one of those occupations, though not always a demoralizing one, which absorbs much of the child labour drifting into the city, *owing to a total absence of legal restrictions on the age of the child employed for the purpose*. A large number of the domestic servants in our sample have stated that they entered the occupation at a very early age, sometimes as early as the age of eight or nine, thereby preparing themselves as household drudges for life with almost all chances for future development being obliterated.<sup>13</sup> Thus it is rightly pointed out by Raymond Fuller, that, “Poverty and child labour beget each other and tend to perpetuate themselves in families and communities . . . Child labour”, he continues, “is both a cause and an effect of illiteracy and ignorance, of low wages and unemployment, of standards of living and levels of family and community life.”<sup>14</sup> The hazards to physical and moral health, along with educational and vocational disadvantages suffered by children who prematurely leave school have been fully recognized at the present day and we need not go into detail over here. But it would suffice to note for our purposes that a complete break from school and even from home in the case of very young domestic workers, finding themselves in a different environment of a strange household of the employer, burdened with worries over the economic affairs of home, no doubt aggravates great emotional stress and mental instability. It would be justifiable if the employer’s household were a fairly decent one which might even serve as a protective influence, acculturating the child from a poor home in the ways of a refined existence. But if the employer’s own household happens to be of an unwholesome kind with none too pleasant elements in it, where the child is treated with cruelty, even utilized for *vicious purposes* (in case of female children), as it is sometimes reported, and exploited for 12 to 14 hours a day on an absurdly low wage

12. Charles Booth: *op. cit.* second series vol. V, p. 297.

13. There are on the whole 3.2 per cent child servants in our sample who are below the age of 16.

14. Raymond C. Fuller: ‘Child labour’ *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. III.

of 6 to 8 rupees a month, then the demoralizing influence on him or her can very well be appreciated! Instances were brought to the notice of the investigator, where in the fair name of "adoption" in the family the child from a poor home was brought up as a mere household drudge in return for food and shelter but no freedom or wages — *a modern version of slavery!*

Among other reasons for non-school-attendance or early leaving mentioned by the employees, was a lack of importance attached to education in their young days. Although among men, only 5 persons gave this excuse, it is among the women that we find the largest number, about 47 per cent, who were withdrawn from school at an early age or were not at all sent to school. This reflects lower class culture traits where female education is looked upon with suspicion and disfavour and where parents are forced to curtail the education of girls by sheer pressure of tradition. And where young girls are not sent to work, they are kept at home to look after the housework while both parents are away at their respective places of occupation. Education, then, receives no attention in such cases.

Closely associated with this factor, is the early age at marriage among these classes which interrupts education. Only 1.2 per cent of the men have given marriage as a reason for terminating school-life, while we have 6.5 per cent women in our sample who have given the same reason. In this connection the author of the 1931 Census Report of India writes, "One of the most serious obstacles to the spread of female education is the early age of marriage which causes girls to be taken from school before they have reached even the standard of the primary school leaving certificate".<sup>15</sup>

Lack of intelligence and interest in studies was another answer given by 7.5 per cent men and 3.5 per cent women domestics for discontinuing schooling. This is a very good reflection on the type of the education imparted to the children of the poorer working classes. When education becomes boring and seems insignificant to the child, entirely unrelated to his future economic role he naturally tends to lose interest in what he is made to learn and

blames himself as being unintelligent and inapt. It is a recognized fact now that the different varieties of intellectual ability and natural talent do not all require the same type of education, and that the content of the curriculum should differ at various levels even though educational opportunity should be the same for all classes. On this point A.K.C. Ottaway has very significantly observed that, "Equal opportunity for education does not mean identical education for all; it means that education at all levels should be of the best possible kind to suit each child, and that the highest education should be accessible to anyone able to profit by it".<sup>16</sup> Apart from the economic circumstances, it is the general disillusionment and frustration with the nature of education which is partly responsible for the apathy and lack of interest both on the part of many of the children and their parents from poorer homes, towards education as such, which results in early dropping out from school.

When the school is at an unusually long distance from home or when there is no school at all in the village in the native place one cannot blame the individuals for not being educated. 7.5 per cent men and 5 per cent women in our sample complained that their illiteracy was chiefly due to this factor. The Census of 1931 reported that about two-thirds of the villages in India had no schools at that time.<sup>17</sup> Considering the fact that a large majority of the domestic servants in our sample are over 25 years of age this statement does apply to the educational system in their childhood days which lacked so many amenities.

Even when the school was there it might not have had sufficient attraction for the child, who, under the slightest pretext preferred to leave it for good. "Poor homes and poor schools are frequently associated", write J. E. Floud and collaborators.<sup>18</sup> The school environment is thus another factor in the education of a child. Beatings from the teacher as a reason for leaving given by 6 men and 3 women in our sample is no doubt a reflection on the system influencing the child's desire not to stay in school. "If the

16. Ottaway A.K.C. op. cit. p. 92 .

17. Census of India-1931 op. cit. p. 335.

18. J. E. Floud and others: *Social Class And Educational Opportunity*, London 1956, p. 96.

world of the child," remarks W. Lloyd Warner, is pleasant, rewarding, and increases his self-esteem, he is likely to want to stay and do well. If it is punishing and decreases his self-respect, he is likely to do poorly and want to quit".<sup>19</sup> The same is the case with failure in examination which causes stagnation and injures the prestige of the child, not to speak of the economic loss involved at the sacrifice of a full year's work on some gainful occupation. Two persons in our sample, one Gujerati man servant and one Marathi woman servant have given this as a reason for discontinuing education.

The educational ambition of three men was thwarted owing to absence of further standards in the rural school, otherwise they said that they would have continued schooling. Thus we have analysed in some detail the various causes, which all have, in some measure or the other, a foundation in poverty and in lower class culture, which have acted as a stumbling block in the educational achievement of the individuals interviewed.

If the opportunity for education was lacking, the regret at having not had this opportunity is always there in almost all the workers interviewed. They attribute much of their ills and misery to this loss of educational chances which has landed them in a type of work which is quite distasteful to them all. The sense of regret is still deeper in the case of those who did have some education at the elementary and even at the secondary levels with a little smattering of English, and who somehow have happened to drift into domestic service which according to them is nothing but drudgery.

Not only is the regret there, but there is also a desire, nay in some cases a fervent desire, to acquire some kind of learning if opportunity presented itself. This is so to a greater or lesser extent both among the literates and the illiterates, both men and women, young and old, as can be seen in the following tables 51a and 51b. We note that among men servants 69 per cent of the literate individuals are desirous of education. The Marathis show the greatest number, about 87 per cent of the literates hav-

19. W. Lloyd Warner and others: *Social Class In America*, Chicago 1949, p. 28.

TABLE 51a

THE PERCENTAGE OF LITERATE AND ILLITERATE PERSONS  
WHO ARE DESIROUS OF EDUCATING THEMSELVES

	<i>Men Domestics</i>			
	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Literate persons desirous of education	58%	67%	87%	69%
Literate persons not desirous of education	42%	33%	13%	31%
Illiterate persons desirous of education	44%	59%	64%	57%
Illiterate persons not desirous of education	56%	41%	36%	43%

ing this desire. Among the Christians the numbers are comparatively fewer, they being about 58 per cent of the total, in this category.

Among the illiterate men servants we find that in all the communities the numbers desiring education are somewhat smaller than among the literate individuals, though in almost all the cases, with the exception of the Christians, they are more than half the total number of persons in each group. Here too the Marathis have the largest number of persons, 64 per cent of the illiterates, who are desirous of education.

The table for women shows sharper differences in this respect. Here we have as many as 85 per cent of literate women who have evinced this interest in education. We find that in all the communities the percentages are much higher than those among men

TABLE 51b

THE PERCENTAGE OF LITERATE AND ILLITERATE PERSONS  
WHO ARE DESIROUS OF EDUCATING THEMSELVES

*Women Domestics*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Literate persons desirous of education	74%	90%	100%	85%
Literate persons not desirous of education	26%	10%	0%	15%
Illiterate persons desirous of education	43%	38%	36%	38%
Illiterate persons not desirous of education	57%	62%	74%	62%

servants which is surely a fact which arrests our attention. But we find that among illiterate women there is a big drop to only 38 per cent desiring education. The Marathi women show some peculiarity, for while among literates, one hundred per cent of the individuals are desirous of education, among the illiterates the percentage is the lowest, it being only 36 per cent of the total. We find that in both the tables, the Gujarati men and women stand midway between the other two communities as far as the percentages go.

The two tables show on the whole that those literate individuals who have already had some taste of education are more desirous of having some opportunity to learn further than those of their less fortunate bretheren who are illiterate. This is more evident among women than among men.

Although it is never too late to learn, the age of the indi-

vidual does act as a factor influencing this desire for learning. For instance it has been found that, while 87.3 per cent of the individuals below the age of 30 among men servants are eager to learn, there are only 42.6 per cent of such individuals in the age-group above 30. This is true for all the communities, although among the Gujeratis we have many more persons in this upper age-group, about 56.9 per cent of the individuals desirous of education, than among the Christians or the Marathis where the numbers are only 31.9 and 23.5 per cent respectively.

We have discovered a similar situation for women also, although here the margin is broader between the two age-groups for those anxious for learning; for, while there are 75.8 per cent women below 30 having this desire, there are only 27.8 per cent in the age-group above 30 in this category. In all the communities, the women have shown sharper differences between the two age-groups in harbouring this desire for education.

We note therefore in both cases, that the desire is among larger numbers in the members of the younger generation than in those of the older. On the other hand we have quite a few individuals of 16 or 17 who have shown utter indifference to the question of education, while some persons of 55 and 60 have discussed it with a keen interest. From among those of the older generation, who at present do not have any desire for learning, have admitted that in their early years they did have such a desire which was only frustrated by circumstances. Their negative attitude towards education is rather due to the belief on their part that their minds are atrophied by age and would not be able to grasp anything taught to them at this stage. It is therefore this belief in their inability to learn which is correlated to an absence of any desire to learn. Many have expressed a scepticism towards any such opportunity ever being offered to them and therefore prefer to have no such desire. The time factor is an important one for those domestic servants who are desirous of learning. They have all admitted that although they are themselves anxious about learning at least the three R's they would not be allowed time-off from work by their employers to indulge in such a pursuit.

The desire to learn English is greatly expressed by a large number of younger individuals if ever they have the opportunity.

We have at least one example of a Christian man servant in our sample who is privately learning English in spare hours under a paid tutor! Such is their attraction towards the language which, according to them, would throw open the gates for further vocational opportunity.

It was very disappointing to find among some few individuals in the younger generation, many of them below 20, a total absence of any desire to educate themselves. May be, these are the persons who have not yet grasped the true significance of education, not yet having felt the real pinch owing to its absence, as the older persons have, by their hard and bitter experiences, learnt to appreciate its value. Lured by the prospects of earning a few coins to meet their immediate needs, which would set them free from the burden of learning school lessons, they seldom pause to attach any importance to education at all, or to brood upon the very limited opportunities for employment for themselves in the near future. Anyway, it is good that such cases are few and do not represent general tendencies.

If the parents of the last generation, in families beset with poverty, were little impressed with the value of education and consequently withdrew their children from school at an early age, wishing them to start earning as soon as possible, let us see whether domestic servants in our sample, who are themselves parents of children, and who regret their own lack of educational qualifica-

TABLE 52a

## THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN GOING TO SCHOOL OF

*Men Domestics*

Community	No. of children of school going age	No. of children attending school	Percentage
Christians	69	49	71
Gujeratis	73	53	72.5
Marathis	28	12	43
All Communities	170	114	67



TABLE 52b

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN GOING TO SCHOOL OF

*Women Domestics*

Community	No. of children of school going age	No. of children attending school	Percentage
Christians	40	28	70
Gujeratis	125	70	56
Marathis	103	55	53.5
All Communities	268	153	57

tion, assist their children in getting the best out of education or not. A question was accordingly asked of the interviewees as to the number of their children of school going age, that is, between 5 and 18, who were attending school at the time of enquiry. Inspecting tables 52a and 52b designed for the purpose we find that among men servants, out of a total number of 170 children of school going age only 114, or 67 per cent are in school. School attendance is highest for the children of the Gujaratis, it being 72.5 per cent, while the Christians have a close 71 per cent. But the children of the Marathi men servants show the poorest attendance, for there are only 43 per cent of them in school, which is less than half the total.

The table for women, on the whole shows that only 57 per cent of their children are in school, which figure is 10 per cent less than that for men. Here, the largest number of children of school going age, i.e., 70 per cent, are those of Christian women. The Marathi women show the lowest attendance of only 53.5 per cent for their children, although this number is higher than that for the children of Marathi men servants by more than 10 per cent. This may be due to the fact that Marathi women have their families in Bombay with greater facilities for education for their children. But if we compare the two tables in detail this explanation cannot have universal application and as such, therefore, cannot be accepted as a good explanation. For though as regards the number of families actually living in Bombay, the Gujarati women ser-

vants are almost exactly like the Marathi women servants, and the Gujarati men servants like the Marathi men servants, yet in the matter of percentage of schooling of their children they show an exactly opposite phenomenon. The children of the Gujarati male servants going to school form a much higher percentage than those of the Gujarati female servants.

It is gratifying for us to know that one daughter of a Christian man servant who has 6 other children in school, and a son of a Marathi woman servant, are attending college, a fact of which they are naturally very proud! Another Christian man servant, and Marathi woman servant have each a son who has passed the matriculation examination, while 5 other individuals in our sample have each a son studying in the S.S.C. class. These facts show that if not the parents the children of atleast some few domestic servants had completed or were at the stage of completion of the secondary school course at the time of enquiry and that there is a growing desire among these persons that their children should not take up the same occupation and live at the same standard of living as they have done. Many persons have reported that they had given some education ranging from vernacular standard I to standard VIII to some of their children who had passed the school going age at the time of enquiry; while some others admitted having had to keep all their children, who were more than 18 years old, illiterate. At the same time it is rather disappointing that only 67 per cent of the children of school going age of men servants, and 57 per cent of the children of school going age of women servants are attending school with no guarantee of even these being not withdrawn prematurely.

Although the parents have come to recognize the value of education, it is circumstances beyond their control which come in their way of sending all their children to school. Almost all those who do not have any of their children of school going age in school have stated that they cannot afford education for their children however much they want it. Although there are free municipal or government schools all over the city and even in the villages, the parents have to incur expense on books, clothes and other incidentals for their school going children. Even this much of expense they are not in a position to meet with, with the result some of the children are forcibly kept from school.

Quite a few persons have reported that when there is no one to look after the younger children at home while both the parents are away at work, some of the older children have to stay at home, thus being deprived of their educational opportunity. There are also cases of some of the children of our servants playing truant from school, not willing to study at all, after all the efforts of the parents to keep them in school. This is one aspect of the working class culture where the slum environment of the home is not inducive to promote a sense of learning among the children. There are hardly any facilities for study provided in overcrowded one-room tenements which are the common unit of habitation of many of our domestic servants. In such circumstances it is not surprising that some children are reluctant to go to school even at a very early age.

Hence we find that although the domestic servants themselves look upon with regret their own lack of education and consequent loss of opportunity, many of them with few exceptions struggling to give their children a good education, cannot do much for their children in spite of their desire, owing to hindrances placed by their home background and economic condition. The facts for educational opportunity for the children of the domestic servants in our sample, therefore, present wide variations ranging from the one extreme of cases where the parents at all costs keep their children in school, sometimes paying Rs. 15 to 20 a month by way of fees, even sending up some to college, to the other extreme where the parents can hardly afford to give even the bare minimum of education to their children. Although the instances at both these extremes are few, they are worth taking note of in an enquiry like this for giving at least a vague insight into what the future holds for the children of our domestic servants.

Education is generally regarded as a panacea for curing most of the social ills including poverty, and as a ladder for moving up in the social scale. In the context of the present state of affairs it is a matter of doubtful validity whether any significant number of the children of the domestic servants under investigation, with a few rare exceptions, will ever attain a status appreciably higher than, or a standard of living better than that endured by the parents themselves.

## CHAPTER IX

### LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND MODES OF RELAXATION

LEISURE TIME has been described in a few explicit words by Brightbill and Meyer as the "opportunity for pursuits which contribute to personality growth . . . the kind of time which makes life worth living".<sup>1</sup> If life is to be made satisfying and worth living for the individual, and if the scope for a full development of the personality is the desired aim for all, then leisure, like education as is now recognized, is the right as well as the privilege of everyone in a democratic society. The stress and strain of modern living, the sheer monotony of most non-creative types of work which denies the worker the sense of satisfaction and recognition as an individual, along with the crowded miserable conditions under which large sections of population live, make leisure a crying need for all, including the lowest grades of the working classes. This need for leisure for the worker has been well emphasized by Pangburn Weaver who writes, "The worker needs what every one needs : a satisfactory purpose in life apart from the business of making a living, the tranquility of leisure pleasantly and constructively employed, the joy in life of the individual who has some creative activity and whose self is developing. If he could have these his protest against conditions might be less bitter and perhaps be more effectively voiced, and he might be less often misled by delusive economic and social schemes."<sup>2</sup>

The spare time, as against his hours of work is the only part of his life where the individual is free from all compulsion and control, to do what he desires and pursue interests of his own free choice, merely for the gratification involved therein

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1. Brightbill C. K. and Meyer H. D.: *Recreation*. New York, 1953, p. 2.
  2. Weaver Pangburn: 'The Worker's Leisure And His Individuality'. *American Journal of Sociology*, 27 January 1922. pp. 433-441.

and with no economic motive behind. It is difficult for a large number of workers to find happiness in much of the work they do. This is more specially so in the case of those individuals whose work engenders within them a sense of insecurity and loss of personal worth and dignity which denies self-expression. To a certain extent this accounts for the low morale, lack of efficiency and psychological poverty on the part of a large number of workers. In such circumstances what is denied to the natural instinct of the individual for self-development in work, can be compensated for partly by the satisfactory use of leisure in which he may find joy and happiness. On the other hand, viewing the question the other way round, the opportunity for self-expression in his leisure time often brings satisfaction to the worker also in his working time. For, as A. K. C. Ottaway has remarked, "A man is a whole personality, and the happy man in his leisure is usually happy in his work".<sup>3</sup>

It is not enough that the worker should have sufficient leisure after working hours to do what he likes, but that the activities he pursues in his sparetime should be of a wholesome type for the good of his body and mind. This cultural opportunity for leisure, "depends largely upon how well individuals are prepared for it."<sup>4</sup> It is a recognized fact that there are different ways in which people can spend their leisure hours. They may be utilized for activities which bring them physical and social good or they may be wasted over activities which contribute to the deterioration of the individual with consequent baneful effects on society. Leisure time may be spent in active recreational pursuits like participation in sports and games, indulging in certain kinds of arts and crafts, or semi-active pursuits like watching games as a spectator, attending movies and dramas, quiet reading or just taking a stroll out into the open. Or again, leisure time may be a time for mere complete rest and relaxation for releasing tension, for it does happen as in the case of some individuals, that their work-time is so strenuous as to leave no energy for them at the end of the day for any kind of active or semi-active recreation.

3. A. K. C. Ottaway: *Op. cit.* p. 99.

4. Brightbill C. K. and Meyer H. D. *Op. cit.* p. 37.

In the light of these possibilities of spending leisure time let us survey the leisure activities of our domestic servants under consideration and see whether any significant number of them engage themselves in any worthwhile pursuits. Speaking of leisure activities of domestic servants first and foremost raises the question whether they do get any appreciable leisure time. As is observed in a previous chapter, the working hours of a large number of domestic servants are long and irregular spreading from early morning to late in the evening. Such conditions of work leave comparatively much less leisure for the household workers than for those employed in other occupations. With hardly an hour or two here and there for recreation, the servants' interests are apt to be rather limited in their scope. This feature coupled with the fact that most of our domestic servants have hardly received much by way of an education should be sufficient to prevent us from having any high expectations as to their leisure activities. It is an acknowledged fact that education prepares the individual in the arts of leisure which contribute to a rich and satisfying living.<sup>5</sup> When, therefore, there is a deficiency in education there is also a comparative poverty of leisure activity. While discussing the question of leisure interests of domestic servants in England, C. V. Butler has aptly remarked that, "The servants as a class, and other manual workers have both too little leisure and too little training in the right use of what they have".<sup>6</sup> The same remark would, without doubt, hold true for our domestic servants also, and they all seem to be conscious of this fact and regret it too.

In spite of these obstacles the domestic servants, though not all of them, do manage to find the time to engage themselves in some form of recreation or relaxation, if not every day, atleast occasionally. A glance at table 53a reveals some of the leisure activities of our men domestic servants. We notice that these comprise a wide variety of items which include active pursuits like participating in games such as hockey, football, 'hututu', and in other athletic activities, learning and practising music and

5. Cf. Neumeyer M. H. and Neumeyer E. S. *Leisure and Recreation* New York, 1949. pp. 173-197.

6. Butler C.V.: *Op. cit.* pp. 25-26.

TABLE 53a  
MODES OF RECREATION AND RELAXATION OF  
*Men Domestic*

Modes of Recreation and Relaxation	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
1. Playing games like Hockey and Football	8	10	1	1.2	—	—	9	3.6
2. Playing games like Hututu and Lathi	—	—	—	—	16	20	16	6.7
3. Watching sports and matches	13	16.4	2	2.5	1	1.2	16	6.7
4. Playing musical instruments like Violin	7	8.7	—	—	—	—	7	2.9
5. Learning Indian classical music	—	—	2	2.5	—	—	2	0.8
6. Western dancing	1	1.2	—	—	—	—	1	0.4
7. Indian dancing	—	—	—	—	1	1.2	1	0.4
8. Photography	—	—	1	1.2	—	—	1	0.4
9. Reading books and periodicals	46	57.5	46	57.5	27	34	119	50
10. Visiting films	61	76.2	62	77.4	58	72.5	181	75.4
11. Visiting dramas	1	1.2	—	—	—	—	1	0.4
12. Attending Bhajan Mandli	—	—	6	7.5	20	25	26	10.8
13. Visiting & gossiping with friends & relatives	20	25	35	44	41	51.4	96	40
14. Sleeping and resting	2	2.5	1	1.2	—	—	3	1.2
15. Going for walks	10	12.5	4	5	2	2.5	16	6.7
16. No leisure given	2	2.5	—	—	3	3.7	5	2.1

dancing, photography, participating in social activities like the 'bhajan mandlis'; semi-active pursuits like reading books and newspapers, attending sports and matches, visiting films and dramas, going out for a walk, visiting friends and relatives, idle gossip, and also such passive activities like sleeping and resting which may be called complete relaxation.

Although some items of recreational activities of the servants in this list seem quite attractive, we meet with disappointment when we study the actual numbers indulging in them. Except for spending spare time in reading, where we have about 50 per cent of our men servants interested in this particular pastime, we find that the numbers are too few pursuing other cultural activities. For instance there are only 7 men who can play a musical instrument like the violin, and they are all Christians, forming 2.9 per cent of the total men servants. Interest in Indian classical music and taking lessons in it is reported by only 2 Gujarati men. Only one Marathi servant is learning Indian dancing, while one Christian servant has admitted a fondness for western dancing. Photography too, is a hobby of only one individual.

Even interest in sports and athletics is evinced by a very small number of persons, there being about 10.3 per cent participating in some form of games and having membership of some small local teams, and about 6.7 per cent merely attending games and sports as passive spectators. There is a tendency on the part of Christians and Gujaratis to prefer western games, while the Marathi servants occasionally play 'hututu' or 'lathi' which are their favourite sports.

There are a few instances of group activities carried on in spare time in the form of 'bhajan mandlis' among the Marathis in particular and Gujaratis to some extent. The members meet on appointed days, usually late in the evening at a suitable place, exchange news and views and spend hours together singing religious songs and sometimes even dancing around the image of a deity. 25 per cent of the Marathi servants, and 7.5 per cent of the Gujaratis have reported having membership of such 'mandlis', and many more expressed a desire for it "if only time would permit". Apart from participation in games and other athletic pursuits in social clubs by a very small number of individuals, this



is perhaps the only form of group activity engaged in by our domestic servants for recreational purposes. "Group stimulation", write M. H. Neumeyer and E. S. Neumeyer, "is necessary for the greater enjoyment of recreation. It produces and intensifies the emotional experiences. The factor that gives recreation its greatest scope and intensity is that it is social, not solitary".<sup>7</sup> If group participation intensifies and stimulates recreation and serves as a socialising medium, it is a matter of pity that not a very significant number of the domestic servants in our sample avail themselves of it, either through a lack of opportunity or through a lack of interest.

We also observe that art, whether creative or otherwise finds no place in this list of the leisure activities of the domestic servants. Participation in art expression provides enjoyment to many and compensates for the total want of beauty in the dreary existence of a large number of persons. It is difficult to account for the absence of this activity in any form in our group of workers which is indeed a rather unfortunate thing for them. It may be that a lack of education is partly responsible for this phenomenon.

The chief medium of entertainment for the domestic ser-  
workers, as it is for many people in other walks of life is perhaps the motion pictures. For we see in our table that more than three-fourths the number of men servants have reported the picture-going habit with varying frequencies of attendance as we shall see later. This is easy to understand in view of the fact that films provide a momentary relief and their reasonable rates of admission enable the poorer classes with low incomes to enjoy them. Moreover, they can provide suitable entertainment to large numbers. That the drama and the theatre have not much appeal to the lower classes at the present day can be seen from the fact that only one individual in our sample has admitted a taste for them.

Apart from visiting an occasional movie or going out for a walk, the chief leisure activity of the domestic servants is visiting friends and relatives and idle gossip. The resident servants are

7. Neumeyer M. H. and Neumeyer E. S. *Op. cit.* p. 212.

in most cases allowed to entertain their own guests if they are provided with servants' quarters. Many servants have one or two hours free in the evening when they are allowed to go out. It is not an uncommon sight in some of the less-congested localities of the city, to find a group of domestic servants collecting from neighbouring buildings, squatting on the pavements exchanging the day's gossip, or enjoying a game of cards with a cigarette jutting from their mouth. *The pavement is their only club and gossip their pastime!* All the servants eagerly look forward to this evening session in the course of their day's work. This is the only means by which the domestic servants establish social contacts with their fellow servants. A servant's life in his employer's household, away from his own kith and kin, is apt to be lonely especially if it is in a one-servant household. The loneliness is a psychological one, for despite the presence of the members of the employer's family, the servant, though sometimes regarded as one of the family, finds a social barrier separating him from the others. He cannot engage in much conversation with the master or the mistress, he cannot confide secrets in them, he cannot give vent to his sentiments, or express his emotions in their presence, he is always expected to mind his "own position". This creates a real social distance between him and the employer's family which is a psychological trial for the servant. In view of such a situation it is imperative that he should be allowed to go out for an hour or two in the evening when he can meet and mix with friends and fellow workers belonging to his own class, sharing his interests and problems, with whom he can be at home. He is indeed a cruel employer who does not allow his servants freedom for even this much social intercourse. There is a queer notion among some employers that their servant would be spoilt when allowed to mix with other servants who would arouse discontent in him if they happened to enjoy higher wages and better working conditions. Only an employer guilty of exploiting his servant for an absurdly low wage, and giving him really bad treatment, could have such a notion !

Three men servants have said that they spend their spare time chiefly sleeping and resting. That the human body needs sleep and rest to recover from fatigue is granted; but rather more than necessary indulgence in them may be taken to mean that

either domestic work is very tiring for these workers, or they do not have the capacity or the necessary mental make-up to enjoy leisure in any other way for self-expression and a satisfying living.

Five persons, or 2.1 per cent of the total, complained of having no leisure activity at all because of no leisure allowed to them at their place of service. It is a very unfortunate thing for any individual to have no leisure to indulge in pleasurable activity which is so essential for personality growth. This is more especially so when one's work is not at all up to one's satisfaction as in the case of domestic service which is so dull for the servant, for in such instances a lack of leisure would mean the thwarting of personality growth with its consequent bad effects on mental and physical health.

If we examine table 53b for the interests and spare time activities of women servants we find that they are much fewer than those of men and are more static. They include reading books and newspapers, playing indoor games, stitching, knitting and embroidery, art, visiting films, going for walks, visiting friends and relatives, gossip and prayers. But even from among these, the creative and aesthetic pursuits, which if we remember, are absent among men, are found among very few persons. For instance only 9.2 per cent of the women spend their spare time stitching or knitting or doing some kind of embroidery. These crafts which provide an outlet for manual dexterity are useful and creative, and demand no special skill or intelligence. It is surprising why so few women are interested in them. Also, interest in art is evinced by only three persons forming 1.1 per cent of the total number of women in the sample. Incidentally, all these three are very young girls freshly withdrawn from school, whose interest in drawing and painting may be only a continuing influence of their little education.

Reading as a pastime is reported by 50 per cent of the men servants, but only about 7 per cent of women have mentioned it as a spare time pursuit. Reading is a source of great satisfaction and even enjoyment for many people irrespective of class; and those among our domestic servants who admitted a taste for reading, admitted it with great enthusiasm. The spectacle of domestic servants patiently deciphering the words from a small book, one by one, with an eagerness to know its contents, sitting below an

TABLE 53b

## MODES OF RECREATION AND RELAXATION OF

*Women Domestics*

Modes of Recreation and Relaxation	Christians		Gujeratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
1. Playing indoor games	4	5.7	—	—	—	—	4	1.5
2. Stitching, knitting or embroidery	13	18.6	6	8	5	4.3	24	9.2
3. Art	2	2.9	1	1.3	—	—	3	1.1
4. Reading books and periodicals	14	20	4	5.3	—	—	18	6.9
5. Visiting films	47	77	41	54.5	34	30	122	46.5
6. Visiting and gossiping with friends and relatives	36	51.5	52	69	91	79	179	68.5
7. Going for walks	—	—	2	2.6	—	—	2	0.7
8. Prayers	3	4.3	1	1.3	—	—	4	1.5
9. No leisure given	7	10	13	17.4	19	16.6	39	15

electric lamp in the late hours of an evening, must be fairly well familiar to many an employer. What they missed in early life by way of an education in school, they try to compensate for by reading in later life. What they actually read is not specified, though we cannot expect the reading of the servants to constitute any intellectual exercise. But from the reading material lying about in the servants' quarters it was gathered that they read mostly story books and religious or mythological literature. Men seem to be fond of newspapers also, though none of the women has shown interest in them. It is a pity that on the whole so few women are

at all interested in reading. This may be because of their comparatively low literacy standard.

The reading of the domestic servants is not from a point of view of study, though it is said that one of the uses of leisure is education. Only two persons in our whole sample of 500 are utilizing their spare time for study; one of them is a Marathi servant attending a night school after working hours, and the other a Christian learning English under a private tutor, and both are men whose cases are mentioned in a previous chapter. None of the women pursues any study in the free hours. One or two instances were reported of social workers coming over to their chawls in the evenings and conducting adult literacy classes for women. But such attempts being sporadic and irregular, none of our women servants seem to take any note of it or avail themselves of the opportunity during their leisure time.

Sports find no place in this list of leisure activities of women and it is quite natural to expect this among working class women. We have only four women in the Christian community interested in indoor games and again, they too are young in age. For others, even the mention of sports and games sounded ridiculous. Rightly have Slater and Woodside said, "Hobbies and sports are no part of a working class woman's life, nor are they expected to be. Energy and interest are absorbed by the home, and there is a lack of real leisure, or any prolonged periods of time free from interference. The position is accepted as inevitable, and there is no striving after wider contacts".<sup>8</sup> Outside of working hours, home-making is the chief and only occupation of our women domestic servants, more especially so the Gujarati and the Marathi women who have their homes in the city.

Four women, among whom three are Christians and one Gujarati have stated that their main spare time interest is prayers. Any spare moment they find from their work they go to a nearby church or temple. Prayer is no doubt a form of mental relaxation which makes the individual forget his own miserable environment and existence. We shall be discussing later, however, the church-going, or temple-going habits of our domestic servants in some detail as part of leisure activities.

8. Eliot Slater and Moya Woodside: *Op. cit.* p. 87.

The only form of entertainment for our women servants is movies. But looking at the table, we find that only 46.5 per cent of them can afford even this popular entertainment. The number of women seeing films, among the Marathis is lowest, there being only 30 per cent among them visiting them, whereas, among Christians, as many as 77 per cent of the women have admitted their interest in films. Several Gujarati and Marathi women when asked if they ever visited films, have replied that their own life is "one long cinema" of misery and they have no need to go elsewhere to witness it!

Visiting friends and relatives and gossiping is one of the chief pastimes of 68.5 per cent of our women servants. It is not an uncommon sight to find three or four neighbours collecting in the house of one, during evening hours, while there is a lull in their work, exchanging idle gossip.

Parks and play-grounds are the only places where a large number of Christian women domestic servants meet their friends during one or two hours in the evening, where they bring their employers' children for a stroll. One has only to go round the public parks of the city on an evening to find the benches or the lawns occupied by groups of Christian 'Ayahs' with the children playing around them or sitting in their laps. They exchange news, sing songs, read the Bible or tell stories to one another. This is perhaps their only mode of recreation where the parks serve them as clubs for social intercourse.

Since movies are usually the only form of entertainment reported by a significant number of persons in our sample it would be worthwhile analysing the picture-going habits of the domestic servants. Movies, apart from providing relief and escape from the drudgery of life, have other functions too. They have been described by F. G. Robbins as "an agency of social control, a definer of social situations, and a determiner of social attitudes".<sup>9</sup> Again elsewhere she writes, "The motion picture has a tremendous influence on conduct, because man is suggestible and inclined towards imitation".<sup>10</sup> It is rather the frequency of motion picture

9. Florence Greenhoe Robbins: *The Sociology of Play Recreation and Leisure Time*, U.S.A. 1955. p.298.

10. *Ibid* p. 299.

attendance which determines, to some extent, the behaviour patterns and types of attitudes of the individual. Firstly, it has been found that about 24.6 per cent men, and 53.5 per cent women never attend movies at all and hence are unaffected by the influence, whether wholesome or unwholesome, of the movies. Of the rest, the largest number of individuals in both cases, i.e., about 34 per cent men, and 13 per cent women see a picture or two once a month. The number of individuals seeing more than 2 films a month is comparatively small. We do have instances of individuals visiting even 8 or 10 films a month, but they are stray cases constituting a very small portion of the total. On the other hand there are quite a few persons seeing films at much longer intervals of time ranging from one picture in 1 or 2 months to one in 2 or 3 weeks. These also are the persons who cannot be in any way influenced by movies either for good or for evil. In whatever manner, therefore, the films can affect the behaviour of persons, at least so far as our domestic servants are concerned they affect only a very small number who frequent them more than twice or thrice a month.

Prayer and worship are regarded as perhaps one of the ways of relaxing the mind. Attending the places of worship may take the mind away from the trials of life and provide a refreshing, wholesome, spiritual influence to the individual which may go a long way towards the development of character and clean habits. Moreover, places of worship are often the centers of community activity bringing people together and promoting social interaction. The recreational importance of worship has been recognised all over. "We have perhaps become aware that worship itself has a distinct recreational value", says F. G. Robbins. "The ritual, the pageantry as well as the social interaction of doing things in a group are all expressions of this value".<sup>11</sup> Let us then enquire into the church or temple attending habits of our domestic servants.

An analysis of these habits has revealed that among the Christian men and women, a large majority of them, about 86.6 per cent visit the church once or twice a week and sometimes

11. Ibid p. 166. Cf. also. J. Wach: *Sociology of Religion*, London 1947 pp. 35-51, pp. 18-19.

even more frequently than that; 2.1 per cent go to the church once or twice a month. There are on the other hand 11 persons, constituting 7.3 per cent of the total who attend the church every day which is something worth taking note of. Five persons have complained that they can visit the church very rarely because of difficulty in obtaining leave from the employer. It is a thing to be regretted that the religious sentiments of some few persons are stifled owing to exigencies of the occupation.

Among the Gujarati and the Marathi Hindu servants, although the majority attend the temple once or twice a week, the percentage is only 31.7 on the whole, while 24 per cent visit it only occasionally and another 28.8 per cent, only on festivals. Fourteen persons, i.e., 4 per cent of them, have stated that they attend the temple only in their native places and not in Bombay. There are barely 2.3 per cent of the individuals who go to the temple every day at least for a "darshan" of the god, while another 2.8 per cent of the individuals have said that they never attend the temple. Of the latter, 2 persons who are both Gujarati women have admitted that they are not religious minded and have no faith in God, because God has kept them in such misery and poverty. Such an attitude towards religion has been manifested by only these 2 persons in a whole sample of 500. The others are more fatalistic in their approach and accept their present state as something ordained by the Almighty to be endured without complaint. The remaining 8 persons who have admitted not visiting the temple, do so owing to their inability to afford the expense that is to be incurred in the temple. They prefer to worship their God in their own home.

It is noted that the Christians are more regular in their habit of attending the place of worship than the Hindus. This may be owing to a compulsion placed upon them by Church authorities on pain of excommunication. The Hindu servants are more prone to visit the temple on festival days rather than on any ordinary day. A large number of Hindu women servants have expressed the desire for attending the temple more frequently than they do for listening to the "Kathas" or scriptures and mythological stories that are read out before assemblies of women, and for participating in "bhajans." They regret their inability to do so owing to a lack of time. Temple and church activities are very much after



the hearts of these people but the demands of domestic service do not permit them to participate much in such leisure time social intercourse. We agree with M. H. Neumeyer and E. S. Neumeyer when they write, "The nature of one's occupation goes far to set the tone, pitch and tempo of leisure. . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Communal and religious festivals give the servants an opportunity for diversion from their routine and toil. For a large number of them they are days for relaxation and recreation. Most of the domestic servants are given leave from work on at least two or three festivals in a year. If they are not given leave, they take it of their own accord, especially the non-resident servants. Even the resident servants spend the day away from their place of work with friends and relatives. A visit to the place of worship on festival days is almost a *must* for them and they usually put on new clothes for the occasion if they afford. Visits are exchanged among relatives and friends during the day and very often the evening is spent at some place of amusements or entertainment. Extra expenditure is necessarily incurred on festive occasions depending on the capacity of the individual to spend. If the festival is celebrated with one's own family the expenses go very high running into Rs. 100 to 200 especially if new clothes are provided for every member; if on the other hand the family is living away, then only expense on self is incurred which may range from Rs. 5 to 50. Very often the money is borrowed from various sources to meet the gaiety of the festival.

We have only 2 instances in our sample, of a Christian woman and a Marathi man servant who are given the expenses by their employers for their festivals once or twice a year. On the other hand there are 25 individuals, i.e., 5 per cent of the whole sample who do not incur any extra expense on festivals because they cannot afford it, neither do they borrow from any one for that matter.

Anyway, for most of our domestic servants festivals are the only occasions when they can give expression to their emotions and forget the routine of work. It is a matter of regret that not all servants can always participate in the festivities; for again,

TABLE 54a

TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS INDULGING IN SMOKING,  
PAN, TEA, TOBACCO AND AVERAGE AMOUNT OF  
MONEY SPENT ON EACH PER MONTH

*Men Domestic*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Total No. of Persons Smoking	58	63	18	139
Percentage	72	78.5	22.6	58
Average Amount of Money spent   Rs.	7.3	6.8	5	6.7
Total No. of Persons eating Pan	1	6	55	62
Percentage	1.2	7.5	68.5	25.8
Average Amount of Money spent   Rs.	5	2.8	4.1	4
Total No. of Persons Chewing Tobacco	2	2	23	27
Percentage	2.5	2.5	29	11.2
Average Amount of Money spent   Rs.	2	6	1.6	2
Total No. of Persons drinking Tea in excess	1	4	22	27
Percentage	1.2	5	27.5	11.2
Average Amount of Money spent   Rs.	5	4.7	3.8	4

there are quite a few, who, under an unkind employer, may not be given permission to spend the whole day out, especially in the case of the resident servants.

Among other activities engaged in by the domestic servants in their leisure time, not mentioned so far in the foregoing tables,

may be considered smoking, pan-eating, tobacco-chewing and tea-drinking—, the last one in excess. These are some of the modes of mental as well as physical relaxation, which, though they have harmful effects on health in the long run, are considered as desirable or even enjoyable forms of spending free time by the individuals concerned. Such is the craving for these items of consumption, that some persons have even stated that they would go without food but would not forgo any of these, which, according to them soothe the nerves and dispel monotony and worry. It is important to remember that indulgence in such habits is not only injurious to health but consumes so much money from the meagre wages of the worker. Let us ascertain what proportion of our household workers are addicted to smoking, pan-eating etc., and how much money is expended on these items.

In table 54a we find that 58 per cent of the men servants are smokers, each individual spending on an average Rs. 6.7 per month on smoking. Among the Gujeratis there are the largest number of smokers constituting 78.5 per cent of the total, whereas, only 22.6 per cent of the Marathis smoke. The Christians are close to the Gujeratis in number, there being 72 per cent smokers among them and they also spend the largest amount, about Rs. 7.3 per month on smoking. The Marathis on the other hand spend only Rs. 5 per month on an average.

25.8 per cent of the men servants are pan-eaters incurring on an average an expense of Rs. 4 per person per month on pan. But community-wise there are large differences. While there is only a solitary instance of a Christian eating pan, there are 68.5 per cent Marathis indulging in it. Among the Gujeratis also the numbers are few, there being only 7.5 per cent pan-eaters among them, and they spend only Rs. 2.8 per month on pan, while the Marathis spend Rs. 4.1 and the Christian servant spends Rs. 5 on himself for pan.

There are a few persons whose use of tobacco is confined merely to chewing and they are about 11.2 per cent of the total. Here too, we have the largest numbers among Marathis, there being 29 per cent of the total, chewing tobacco but they spend only Rs. 1.6 on this item per individual whereas, the 2 Gujeratis that are there consume each Rs. 6 worth of tobacco per month.

Among the Christians also there are only 2 persons fond of tobacco, and they each spend about Rs. 2 per month.

As for tea-drinking, we have considered only those cases where the quantity consumed exceeds the normal tendency to any considerable extent. It should be remembered that most servants receive tea in their employer's household even if they are non-resident servants. Of those who drink tea in excess, we have 11.2 per cent of the men servants spending on an average an extra Rs. 4 per month. This habit is again found in a large proportion among the Marathis where there are 27.5 per cent of the instances. Among others, the instances are comparatively very few.

Among women also we find such pastimes to a greater or lesser extent as seen in table 54b. 15 per cent of women servants are smokers compared to 58 per cent of men. The Christians and the Gujeratis show larger numbers who smoke, while there is only one such instance among the Marathis. The average amount spent on smoking is about Rs. 4.2 per month.

Pan-eating is indulged in by more women than men, for we have 36.4 per cent of the former compared to 25.8 per cent of the latter. The Marathi women have 54 per-cent of pan-eaters as against 13 per cent Christians eating pan. The money spent on an average on pan by the women is Rs. 3.1 per month.

As regards tobacco-chewing also, the women show a larger percentage of such habitues than the men; there are 34 per cent women having this habit as against only 11.2 per cent of men. But they spend only Rs. 1.5 on an average per month on tobacco.

Women fall short of numbers where tea-drinking in excess is concerned for there are only 6 such cases and they are all Marathis; and they spend about Rs. 4.1 per month on tea.

One thing that strikes us in the two tables is that on all these items except tea, the men spend slightly more than the women. It should be remembered that when the same individual indulges in more than one of these pastimes, then the amount he spends per month reaches upto even Rs. 10 or 12. In such cases, the worker often deprives himself of other more essential things to satisfy some of these useless cravings.

TABLE 54b

TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS INDULGING IN SMOKING,  
PAN, TEA, TOBACCO AND AVERAGE AMOUNT OF  
MONEY SPENT ON EACH PER MONTH

*Women Domestic*

	Christians	Gujeratis	Marathis	All Communities
Total No. of Persons Smoking	18	20	1	39
Percentage	26	26.8	.8	15
Average Amount of Money spent	Rs. 4.3	4.1	.5	4.2
Total No. of Persons eating Pan	9	23	62	94
Percentage	13	30.8	54	36.4
Average Amount of Money spent	Rs. 2.9	3.4	3.1	3.1
Total No. of Persons chewing Tobacco	13	20	55	88
Percentage	18.6	26.8	48	34
Average Amount of Money spent	Rs. 1.6	1.9	1.4	1.5
Total No. of Persons drinking Tea in excess	—	—	6	6
Percentage	—	—	5.2	2.3
Average Amount of Money spent	Rs. —	—	4.1	4.1

As indicated by our data, among men servants there are 22.5 per cent and among women servants, 20.7 per cent of the individuals who indulge in more than one of these items. In both cases, the Marathis far surpass the others in this. On the other hand, there are quite a few individuals who totally abstain from smoking or pan-eating, or tobacco-chewing, or even tea-drinking in excess, and they are 20.8 per cent men and 34 per cent women. The rest of course are addicted to only one of these habits.

It was impossible to ask any of the persons interviewed, whether they were given to the drink habit in view of the present circumstances. Even a mention of it would have aroused suspicion and a consequent suspension of the interview. But from hearsay evidence it was brought to notice by neighbours or friends that some of the men domestic servants, especially the Gujaratis and the Christians are not immune to alcoholism, and sometimes even drink in excess. Stories of their servants coming home dead drunk and misbehaving were also narrated by one or two employers known to the investigator. Nay, even the smell of liquor in the servants' quarters was once or twice detected on some of the rounds of investigation. But on the whole no proper information as to the servant's drink habits was available in any form.

Much the same could be said about gambling as one of the leisure activities of the servants. It is not unusual to see some of the servants squatting in stair-case corners during quiet afternoon hours playing an apparently innocent game of cards. But whether they play for money or not is not ascertainable because of the great secrecy maintained, and it is quite possible to suspect the former at least in some cases. Only one or two individuals in our sample have admitted the habit of attending races but it is quite likely that many more do.

Quite a few men servants have reported that owing to inability to obtain leave for recreational purposes in the evening, they go out "for a walk" during the later hours in the dark after 10 p.m. when their day's work is over. In such circumstances our suspicion might be drawn to any possible shady indulgences inspired by outings in the dark hours. Employers are partly to blame in this case for not allowing their servants time off in the evening for healthy recreational pursuits.

What the domestic servants need is a scope for a proper organization of their recreational activities through social clubs. We have very few individuals in our sample who participate in sports and games in some kind of club for the poorer classes. For instance, there are only 8 Christian and 1 Gujarati men domestics who reported being members of some sports clubs, while about 16 Marathi men servants are members of some small teams playing Indian games like "hututu" and "lathi". The rest of the

domestic servants are unaware of any such activities or organizations.

That a large number of men servants would like to participate in club activities in their spare time if opportunity were offered to them can be seen from table 55a. 75.5 per cent of the men servants have expressed a desire for having a club, of whom the majority are from among the Gujaratis; while about 21 others constituting 8.6 per cent of the total have shown great enthusiasm and have said that they are very desirous of having a club organized for themselves. Only about 15.6 per cent of the individuals are apathetic towards the question, and one Christian servant has not understood what is meant by a social club.

TABLE 55a

NUMBER OF PERSONS DESIROUS OF HAVING A SOCIAL CLUB

*Men Domestics*

	Christians		Gujaratis		Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Very desirous of a club	9	11.3	10	12.6	2	2.5	21	8.6
Desirous of a club	49	61	67	83.6	65	81.3	181	75.5
Not desirous of a club	21	26.5	3	3.8	13	16.2	37	15.6
Could not understand what is meant by a club	1	1.2	—	—	—	—	1	.4
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100	240	100

A priori, working class women could not be expected to show much interest in the subject and we see in our table 55b that on the whole only about 26.5 per cent of the women servants have expressed a desire for having some kind of a club organization where the women of their own class could assemble for recreational activities. Here again the majority are from among the Gujeratis where there are 58.5 per cent of such individuals desiring social activities. Seven women, however, are very desirous of it. But a large number of women servants on the whole, about 43.5 per cent, have shown no interest in having a women's club organization and 27.3 per cent, the majority from among the Marathis have not understood the question.

As has been mentioned in a previous chapter, quite a few Christian servants are members of residential clubs and these

TABLE 55b

NUMBER OF PERSONS DESIROUS OF HAVING A SOCIAL CLUB

*Women Domestic*

	Christians				Marathis		All Communities	
	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage	Nos.	Percentage
Very desirous of a club	2	2.9	5	6.6	—	—	7	2.7
Desirous of a club	19	27.3	44	58.5	6	5.2	69	26.5
Not desirous of a club	48	68.4	26	34.9	39	33.8	113	43.5
Could not understand what is meant by a club	1	1.4	—	—	70	61	71	27.3
Total	70	100	75	100	115	100	260	100



clubs hardly have anything by way of recreational activities. Their sole purpose is to provide accommodation. The Christians always had these clubs in mind when asked whether they would like to become members of a social club. It was with great difficulty that they were made to understand the meaning of a recreational club.

Two or three individuals in our sample, who have a taste for reading, have expressed a desire for having a free library where they can go in their spare time to read books and periodicals. The women on the other hand are more anxious of having religious organizations formed for them.

A discussion about the recreational activities of the domestic servants would not be complete without a reference to a Recreation and Social Centre for the Domestic Servants in the city and the valuable work that is being carried on there although on a very small scale.. Information about the activities of this Centre was obtained by interviewing the authorities concerned. On enquiring, it was discovered that it forms part of a world-wide movement for domestic girl servants founded by a certain Vicenta Maria in Madrid in the last century. The institution is exclusively for domestic servants, and that too only for women, of all castes and creeds. It is essentially a recreation centre but also caters for the other social and spiritual needs of the young servants. Twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays the servants from the surrounding locality attend the place which provides for them facilities for indoor, as well as more active games. Even the older women have been reported to take interest in games.

The institution also runs a literacy class where the servants of all ages are taught reading, writing and simple arithmetic. About no other activity do the domestic servants show so much enthusiasm as about acquiring literacy. The women are also taught tailoring, laundry-work, needle-work, flower-making and various other domestic arts and crafts.

Once in a while they have a film-show for the servants, and they also arrange parties and socials. A picnic is organized once a year when the authorities send a letter to the servants' employers to let them have a half day off for the purpose. For all these activities the servants are charged only Rs. 2½ a year. Provisions

are also kept on a limited scale to give shelter to the young servant girls when they are out of employment. And the institution acts as an employment bureau supplying employers with domestic servants when they go there to place their demands. Great care is taken by the persons in charge to see that the girls are placed in decent households and in a wholesome environment.

The Centre is not only a place catering for the recreational needs of the women but also serves a very useful purpose as a Home which receives children from very poor families and gives them all varieties of domestic training including cleaning and washing. This would enable them, when they grow up, to find suitable employment in domestic service. While emphasis is laid on imparting manual training and teaching the dignity of labour, the mental and spiritual development of the individuals is not neglected, and character training of the future servants forms an important part of the whole programme.

This institution which is part of the Christian missionary activities in India claims to be the only one of its kind in the whole country, opened in 1951. In the city it has two houses, the main one at Colaba and its branch at Byculla. The authorities regretted that owing to lack of funds and the general apathy of the employers towards their servants having any recreational advantages, the scope of their activities was limited, but they expressed a great hope for expanding the institution for the servants in the future. Unfortunately, it has been little known in the city and has not secured any wide publicity. None of the servants in our sample seemed to know of it either. But the quality of the work that is silently being carried out for the domestic servants within the walls of the premises, with a missionary zeal inspired by its great foundress, is the most remarkable of its kind in the country. Few people have ever thought of providing recreation and training to the domestic servants and the ambitious effort that is being made in so humble a manner by the "Daughters of Mary Immaculate" is worthy of our highest praise and greatest encouragement.

This little example itself shows that servants, left to themselves, have little or no idea of, or opportunity for this kind of

common action. Even in their matters of recreation they need guidance and leadership, and therefore initiative has to be taken from outside. But once they get the necessary opportunity they do not show themselves incapable of social or group activity. When their problem of recreation is discussed many of them realise its importance for themselves, and some at least display great enthusiasm over the subject. We therefore agree with C. V. Butler when he says that, "Some servants seem to starve from inanition, not because they have not the capacity to enjoy the ideal in life, but because it has not yet been presented to them".<sup>13</sup>

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13. C. V. Butler: *Op cit.* p. 27.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSION

THE CURTAIN falls as the picture of the survey of the living and working conditions of the domestic servants as a class of workers engaged in private households, comes to a close. The beholder is left with lasting impressions of the neglected facts just unfolded, which give rise to certain questions as to the nature of domestic service as an occupation and the problems it poses before the workers employed in it, and prompt suggestions for their remedies.

86,875 persons are engaged in the city of Bombay in domestic service, an industry marked out for its uniqueness from all other forms of industries and services. A fairly good idea has been obtained regarding the conditions offered to the domestic workers from the sample studied. It has been seen that the problems confronting the workers in domestic service are not only industrial, but they are also personal, owing to the close personal relationship involved in this occupation. In fact the industrial and the personal aspects of the nature of the problems are interdependent and the greater importance of the personal aspect distinguishes domestic service from other trades and occupations. It is this personal element in domestic service which creates difficulties in treating the occupation along the same line as others, as will be seen presently.

It may be asked first, what are the industrial aspects of the problems for those employed in domestic service? How far are the conditions obtaining in this particular occupation adequate for a satisfactory living for the workers, as recorded in the survey? Since money wage is the first consideration for a worker taking up a job, the first question one would ask on its industrial side is whether domestic service offers its workers enough for a minimum standard of living for themselves and their dependants. It was observed in Chapter VI that in domestic service there are no definite standards of wages maintained in relation to the nature of the services

performed. Since in an economically non-productive industry like domestic service which produces utilities and not goods for profit, it is difficult to assess wages, the settlement of wages is left entirely to the individual bargaining between employer and employed. This is more especially so because the workers in this field neither have the backing of legislation nor the strength of an organization to protect their interests. Such being the position of the domestic labour market where the worker is without power of choice, there is a tendency on the part of the employer class to exploit the ignorance and weakness of the domestic workers seeking job in their households, by keeping their wages very often unduly low. This was substantiated by our data where it was discovered that the majority of workers receive a wage much below Rs. 50 per month.

Perhaps it might be argued that domestic service provides food and shelter to the worker from a poor home and that the "real" wages of the servants consist in board and lodging. No doubt this is true, but it applies mainly to the resident servants and not to those who live out. Also, this kind of payment in kind for the resident worker is beset with certain limitations. Although it may substantially raise the "real" remuneration, it is not exchangeable to meet the other needs of the worker as was already pointed out. It was also noted that the money-wages in general, of those who receive board are much lower than of those who do not receive such amenities. Conversely, the non-resident worker who earns a comparatively, slightly higher wage, finds much of his earnings expended on food and rent, with the result, in both instances, the absolute lowness of the wages for the domestic servants makes it impossible for either the resident or the non-resident workers to effect any savings for themselves or their dependants, for their old age or periods of sickness and unemployment. This causes great insecurity for workers in this field of occupation, whose living conditions remain in a very precarious state. The precariousness of existence is emphasized all the more in view of the fact that there are neither sickness nor old age benefits by way of any compulsory insurance schemes for the household workers, and that the workers are very often turned out of service without adequate grounds and without notice.

From the study of the effect of wages in domestic service on

family earnings it was made clear that the family earnings are highest where the individuals concerned are the supplementary earners, and lowest where they are the sole earning members. This shows that so far as money-wages go, domestic service is tolerable for those who can supplement their family income or who do not have any dependants, but for those who depend chiefly or solely on this occupation for the livelihood of their families, it does not compare favourably with other occupations and necessitates a sub-standard existence. The more or less regular incurring of debts on the part of a large number of workers and their families testifies to the low economic status of the domestic servant class.

While estimating the "real" wages of an occupation, future prospects and opportunities of advancement are an important item to be taken into consideration. Does domestic service hold out any prospects for advancement to the workers engaged in it? The discussion of wages in relation to the different ages of the individuals interviewed has revealed that the wages increase with increasing age. But it was also made clear that this increase in wages is decidedly effected at the cost of great mobility of this class of workers from house to house with the aim of "bettering themselves", as was revealed from the fact that a majority of them hold a job for less than five years, rather than due to any substantial increments offered to them by their employers for long periods of service. Nor does domestic service have to offer to a large number of workers any extra rewards in the form of bonus or other gratuities as the workers' right, except in very rare instances, which may attract them to take up the occupation.

In view of this, it seems that, for the young and inefficient workers who have no homes or parents, or poor ones, and who are fed and clothed in the households of their employers, domestic service has more advantages to offer than for those advanced in age and experience and having families looking up to them for support, thereby carrying heavy economic responsibilities.

A comparative lack of prospects in domestic service has its repercussions on the different aspects of the servants' life. As was seen in the Chapter on Marriage, one-tenth of the individuals in our sample, a majority of them being men, have had to remain

unmarried even till the age of 35 or 40 owing to financial difficulties and bleak future prospects in the occupation they have been obliged to take up under pressure of circumstances. The marital data also disclosed that among factors working towards more or less instability of conjugal relations of the married persons are, inadequate income, lack of property ties, spatial separation between the spouses necessitated by the exigencies of the occupation, among this class of workers.

The low wages and lack of opportunities for advancement, therefore, may be considered to be one of the chief reasons for domestic service remaining unpopular among the workers in this field. More than for anything else, there was recorded a clamour for a higher wage from all directions in the course of the survey.

Another industrial drawback of the occupation, making it unattractive for the domestic servants, apart from lack of wage standards, is loss of freedom owing to unduly long hours of work involved in it. This is one of the chief reasons stated by a large number of workers for preferring work in the factories and elsewhere, where hours of work are fixed and the person knows when he has finished his work. Long and irregular hours of work in domestic service was made evident from our data where it was seen that the working time of a majority of workers, including young children, exceeds 10 hours and even runs up to 15 and 17 hours in the case of some. This is more especially true for the resident servants who are expected to be under orders all day and for whom service becomes a "tie" or even a "prison", even if the work itself may not be incessant as such. Since domestic service involves a close personal relationship between the employer and the employed, the long hours on duty would make the servant's life all the more miserable if the relationship was a wrong one.

The effects of long working hours on body and mind have already been pointed out. The Chapter on the Leisure Activities of the domestic servants has revealed a comparative poverty of recreational pursuits which is largely owing to a lack of leisure time accorded to this class of workers. This makes the servant's life narrow and limited in its outlook, rendering it often artificial, and without any interest, and consequently stunting the personality growth of the individual. As a result of this lack of healthy

leisure activities due to long working hours, it was seen that the servant's mind in a large number of cases is diverted to unwholesome pastimes like smoking, pan-eating, tobacco-chewing and even drinking, involving proportionately large expenditures out of their meagre earnings, in order to release the tension caused by work, and dispel boredom and monotony.

Apart from unduly long hours of work required in domestic service, it was also noted that there is a woeful lack of standards regarding holidays, servants' days-off and sick leave for the workers in this occupation. While some servants get half a day's leave, some may get a whole day, and the frequency also varies from once a week to once a month, or even once in two to three months; though there are greater numbers in the latter category. Again, while some are allowed time-off to go out only for a few hours, others do not get even this much respite from their work. In this case, the non-resident workers are in a better position, for whether granted leave or not, they may stay away when necessary, though very often at the risk of forfeiting their wage for the day.

An annual holiday with pay varying from 8 days to one month in a year, is known to only a very small minority of workers, a large number of them enjoying no such facilities and having to forgo their wage every time they go on a holiday. The same inconsistencies are observable regarding sick leave. Very rarely a sick leave with pay is allowed to a worker for more than 10 or 12 days, and in a significant number of cases, wages are deducted for time out for illness, making it often necessary for them to be forced to work. This is more particularly true in the case of some resident workers. In the event of a prolonged illness, the domestic worker often runs the risk of losing his job. The same could be said for women on maternity leave.

These considerations of domestic service may lead one to conclude that it is an occupation which has remained completely unstandardized and unprotected by legal safeguards and therefore unattractive as far as the conditions of employment are concerned, in comparison with other occupations. The legislator and the social reformer seem to have left domestic service entirely untouched, considering it a thing apart from other trades and industries. There remains, therefore, an important field with a vast scope for



improvement and security if India does not wish to experience the same shortage of supplies, as in the western countries in the domestic labour market in the near future with the rapid competition from Industrialism. But if the scope for improvement is vast, the difficulties to be overcome are great in this occupation.

The root cause of domestic service remaining unstandardized and unpopular for the workers is the low social status attached to the occupation and the loss of caste involved in it, thereby causing great discontent among the workers. This stigma of social inferiority is a great stumbling block to domestic service being brought in line with other occupations. The servants in general are made to feel their position very keenly and treated almost as a class apart, as if devoid of any human qualities — *as if they were nothing and no body*. This is coupled with the time-old reproach that any one can be a servant and get some kind of a job, which is considerably responsible for lowering the industrial status of the occupation, with the result, they have remained ignored not only by the employer class, but also by other sections of the working class population. Any attempt at ameliorating their conditions, therefore, is likely to meet with serious resentment from the employer class.

Another important drawback causing the occupation to remain unstandardized is the unorganized state of domestic service in our country. One of the important criteria for judging the industrial position of a trade is the measure of organization attained by the workers. The difficulties in the formation of an organization of the domestic workers have already been enumerated in Chapter VI, the chief among which being the heterogeneity and mobility of the servant population, the scattered nature of the trade, wide variation of conditions offered in different households, and the apathy and ignorance of the servants themselves. As long as the servants as a class remain unorganized without intelligent co-operation, and unaware of the measures taken for their own good, when authority steps in, most of the reforms carried out for them are likely to remain ineffective.

But the most important reason for domestic service differing from the other occupations and remaining unstandardized and also unorganized is the close personal relationship involved in the occupation between the employer and the employed, and an al-

together distinct nature of household work. This is perhaps one of the greatest obstacles in the path of the legislator and also the trade-union organizer to set up standards and impose legislative restrictions on the conditions of employment.

It is a recognized fact that in the adoption of a fair policy towards labour it is necessary to improve labour legislation. But in order that legislation should prove effective, it must be enforceable. This could be done only by a well-organized labour inspectorate which would have the necessary powers and facilities for the efficient performance of its duties. But so far as domestic service is concerned, it becomes difficult to enforce labour legislation, for household employers would be likely to resent any rigid delimitation of rights and duties out of an inherent dislike of outsiders intruding into the home. This situation is very well explained by Thomas Graham while discussing problems of labour inspection, in this way: "In general, labour legislation dealing with domestic service is difficult to enforce. Any routine inquiries by a labour inspector without any specific complaint to investigate would be regarded as an unjustifiable intrusion into the privacy of the household, and even the servant would readily take the side of the family in expressing disapproval".<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the question of labour inspection services to enforce legislation in private households, there arises difficulties, in the first instance, in bringing legislative restrictions as such owing to the very nature of the occupation. For example there are difficulties in the case of fixing a rigid minimum wage rate by law because the conditions of service vary so much from house to house both in requirements and in remuneration, and more so in the amenities. And, as C. V. Butler, explains, "It is impossible to assess minimum rates with definite reference to work done and domestic work cannot be definite".<sup>2</sup> Hence it can be seen that practical difficulties loom large, rendering standardization delicate arithmetic. Besides, it may be argued that there can be a standard of wages only in relation to a standard of efficiency, and in domestic service there are not well-established standards of effi-

1. Thomas Graham: 'Some Problems of Labour Inspection. In Under-developed Countries', *International Labour Review*, June 1954, p. 547.
2. Butler, C. V. op. p. 60.

ciency in the work performance. This is more so owing to the peculiarities of individual employers and servants.

Practically the same difficulties would arise in the fixation of hours of work and leisure hours for the domestic servants. Although many employers would agree to the desirability of giving their servants a certain amount of free time, it would not be possible for them to have any hard and fast rules in this respect, since the domestic servant is often considered a member of the employer's family catering for human needs and, therefore, expected to share its life and be present when needed. Enforcement of any rigid rules regarding hours of work would be still more difficult for non-resident part-time servants working for three or four employers at the same time.

These same conditions would make it difficult for employers to grant regular holidays to the servant especially in one-servant households, where, in the absence of the servant on his day-off, the mistress of the house would herself have to "stoop" to perform all the household chores.

Difficulties for granting a paid annual holiday, or even a sick leave for a prolonged period, to the servants on the part of a lower middle-class employer are easy to understand. It would be an economic strain on the employer who, apart from paying his own servant for the holidays would have to incur an additional expense of hiring a new servant to replace the old one in his absence.

These difficulties in the way of reorganizing the conditions in domestic service, however great apparently, should not frustrate the hopes of a social reformer or even a legislator. Difficulties have always been experienced, and are always expected to be confronted with in any big attempt at reforming any aspect of social life whether industrial or otherwise. Moreover, a lesson has to be learnt, and inspiration to be derived from the way already shown by some of the countries of the West in the direction of effecting some substantial gain for the household workers who form an important section of the working class population in our social structure.

It is not part of a sound industrial policy to isolate industrial problems when an important industry is left out like that. With

the assurance given by Booth that, "there is probably no field of honest labour needed by society that would not, if worked with a sense of responsibility become satisfactory in itself, both socially and economically",<sup>3</sup> it is felt that the time is ripe for the workers in domestic service to claim adequate attention from the community at large.

The first essential thing to be done is to change the whole aspect of the occupation, so that domestic service becomes a self-respecting occupation, *lifted out from the slough of degradation in which it has remained immersed for centuries*. For it is quite an unwholesome thing that a large and important industry should remain neglected and despised in a democratic society. The raising of the status of the servant could be achieved partly by stirring up public opinion and making it conscious of the value of the services rendered by the domestic worker to the family. The efficacy of fostering public opinion in the case of those trades in which the individuals are either apathetic or helpless was well emphasized by Booth when he wrote that, "we may find in an aroused and enlightened public opinion the main lever by which the tardy wheels of reform may be quickened".<sup>4</sup>

But it is not enough to stop merely after arousing public opinion. What is needed is an improvement from within. What lowers the industrial status of a trade, more than anything else, is the idea that any one can take it up at a short notice without requiring any special training or skill or any special powers to perform it. And it is chiefly because of this underlying idea that remuneration in such a trade falls generally to the lowest level. Domestic service is one such occupation which has always suffered from this misconception, and hence the absence of standards within it. The remedy, of course, lies in improving the character of the work done, or the service rendered, in other words, in improving the efficiency of the servant.

A middle-class employer is likely to complain about the inefficiency or incompetency of his servants and to resent, on these grounds, to bring about improvement in the conditions to be

3. Charles Booth: op. cit. Second Series, Vol. p. 290.

4. Ibid. p. 295.

offered. But the fact should not be lost sight of that the incompetency of the servants is to a certain extent due to the knowledge that the rewards of their labour are not for them and that there is no industrial incentive to improvement.

On the other hand there is a great deal of room for improving the efficiency of the servants. A scheme for the training of skilled workers of the future, with the aim of inculcating in them a sense of confidence in themselves and breaking down the barriers separating them from other members of the community, is very much desired at the present moment. In doing this, the methods followed in the United Kingdom could very well be adapted, with adequate adjustments to suit the local conditions. A programme for imparting domestic training in the technique of washing, cleaning, cooking, serving, household management, etc., could be made to fit into the curriculums in the schools catering for the needs of the working class children. Also, special training centres in the form of trade-schools, for adult workers, located in different parts of the city, giving free training, or training at a nominal expense, to the workers desiring it, and undertaken by women's organizations, since domestic service is a woman's problem, would do much to recruit a fairly good number of workers. These, in turn, would help to raise the status of the occupation.

In building up a programme for training in domestic service, it should be remembered that too much emphasis should not be put on the technical side, for the products of such a training are more likely to become "too 'efficient' to condescend to the mere potato-peeling and dish-washing which form so large a part of all domestic work",<sup>5</sup> as Butler points out. Some attention should be paid to the character training of the servants of the future, for a good character is one of the chief requisites for a career in domestic service, and many employers would prefer servants who are willing and teachable, to those who are highly trained and impertinent. Incidentally, it may be suggested that a little bit of moral instruction and sex information to young women workers would improve the moral tone of the occupation and protect the

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5. Butler C. V. op. cit. pp. 78-80.

girls from some of the dangers in domestic service, making things more secure for them in the long run.

One important result expected from setting up recruiting centres for domestic workers, apart from creating interest in their work as an important remedy, is the awakening within them of the "consciousness of kind" by bringing together large numbers of workers having common interests and common problems. The instilling of this awareness of belonging to a group performing similar tasks whose value they have learnt to appreciate themselves, is the most essential step towards organizing the servants and forming them into compact groups more or less along trade-union lines so as to make intelligent demands as to what improvements they desire, and be able to supply efficient service to the employer class. It would be of no use merely to prepare workers for efficient domestic service if the conditions offered to them in the employment they take up, are to remain unchanged, and unattractive as before. For it goes without saying that an improvement in the standards of employment goes hand in hand with an improvement in the efficiency of the workers; and both these factors are necessary to raise the status of the employment. And herein lies the need for organizing the domestic workers to protect their interests and set up standards for themselves in connection with minimum wage rates, maximum hours of work required, weekly days of rest, annual holidays, sick leave, etc., which is a necessary accompaniment of trade union action. Moreover, a well organized association of the domestic servants could be instrumental in exercising considerable influence in the shaping of public opinion on some of the questions pertaining to domestic labour.

There remains, therefore, a vast field open for a good organizer for this class of workers. But it is doubtful whether the initiative will ever be taken by any one among the servants themselves, although the domestic servants are badly in need of leaders from among their own class to build up group morale. And there is nevertheless a healthy awareness and a keen desire to have a combination, as was observed in the course of the survey. On the other hand, better results are likely to be obtained if the leadership in organizing these workers is assumed from among

educated workers to guide more intelligently the destiny of the class.

It is not sufficient that merely the domestic servants should organize to put forward their demands. It would be much more desirable that a machinery be set up for forming combinations of the employer class also and that the definite standards required in domestic service be laid down by an amicable collective bargaining, or mutual agreement, between employer-employee organizations as it has been done in some of the continental countries, instead of resorting to any unpleasant or even violent methods.

Since the uniqueness of domestic service lies in the close personal relationship between employer and servant, more could be achieved by a successful propaganda work among the employers who could thereby be made conscious of the basic needs of the workers they employ in their own households and who hold the future of domestic service mainly in their hands. In fact there is a grave need for the mistresses to be imparted training in household management and management and treatment of servants in their care. Servants are very often spoken to very slightly with a definite rudeness which reflects sheer lack of manners on the part of the employers. In fact the human side of the servant is utterly neglected to which the servants, who are not expected to "answer back", are very much sensitive. *Much of the undesirability in domestic service would be removed if the employers could think that servants are human beings as good as they themselves, and not machines to be worked up and exploited for their helplessness.*

Before resorting to legislative restrictions in domestic service, it is considered more expedient to bring home to the employers by persuasive methods the necessity and the possibility of delimiting and demarcating the servant's hours of work daily, by a carefully drawn up work schedule for the servants of the household, and of paying extra wages for any overtime work. They could also be made to appreciate the servants' right to at least a half-day holiday every week and one full day off once a month, apart from some public holidays, which would be such a relieving feature in the servants' life. To the argument that the running of a home cannot be confined to definite hours of work for the servant and

that the housewife has to work even longer hours than the servant, it could be pointed out that whereas for the housewife the home is both her job and her life-long interest, for the servant, it is only his job, and what interest the housewife has in her home, the servant has to seek outside his place of work.

Not only could the employers be brought round to set aside servants' hours of rest and recreation, but they could also be educated and made instrumental in encouraging their servants to take up healthy pastimes during leisure hours.

A sympathetic and intelligent mistress, by suggesting some useful spare time activities like building up a hobby, or attending literacy classes or some sports clubs in the evenings could go a long way in making the servants' life interesting and broad in outlook, robbing it of some of its unnecessary toil. The desire for some form of recreational facilities was greatly expressed by a large number of servants interviewed. Here, there is a scope for the local communities to set up and develop educational and recreational centres for which help could be obtained from some school authorities to use their premises for the purpose. Mention has already been made in Chapter IX of a Domestic Servants' Recreation and Social Centre in the city and the activities carried on there. The city needs more such institutions with wide publicity and encouragement given to them.

Inside the home also, at the place of employment, the servants' life could be made more comfortable by adequate sleeping arrangements. It is no doubt true that not all the employers can afford to provide their servants with servants' quarters owing to the fact that most of the houses in the city have not been constructed with adequate facilities for servants' quarters. Still, the employer can find some suitable corners inside his own house away from the smells of the kitchen and dirty drains, with some means for fresh air. Attention of the employers should be drawn to remedy the faulty sleeping arrangements of male and female servants dumped together in narrow passages and balconies and to the moral dangers to which the girl servants are exposed. For the living conditions of non-resident workers, which are simply deplorable in many cases, of course the employers cannot be held responsible, for it is the task of the Municipality to inquire into the housing of these labourers.



These suggestions point out to the fact that much could be achieved by way of improving the working conditions and thereby raising the status of the domestic servants by creating a favourable public opinion with the means of right kind of propaganda work.

One thing that remains to be mentioned so far as the employment of servants is concerned, and which could go a long way in setting up definite standards is the need for the introduction of registry offices in the city to bring suitable employers and servants together. There often arises an ironical situation, where, owing to a comparative absence of such methods of employment, on the one hand, some employers may be hunting for servants and complaining about a lack of efficient servants and on the other, efficient servants may be roaming about the whole city in search of suitable jobs. Although advertisements in newspapers are sometimes resorted to, they are not an efficient means of bringing masters and servants together, for most servants are too ignorant to read newspaper advertisements and reply to them. The Regional Employment Exchanges do maintain registers of domestic servants and help them to obtain employment, but it was reported that domestic service is the last choice of individuals seeking work, and most of them prefer to remain unemployed for years rather than take up work in private households owing to the restrictive conditions of domestic service. The Y.W.C.A. in the city also maintains a labour exchange bureau where some domestic servants are registered and where employers in need of servants apply. But the work done for the domestic servants in both these cases is both on a very small scale, and very inadequate to serve the purpose desired.

It would be more fitting for the occupation of domestic service if the State were to set up separate registry offices for domestic servants, because the requirements of domestic labour are very much different from those of all other forms of labour. Most of the desired remedies could be effected by means of domestic servants' registry offices, so that the occupation could come under some form of social control. Apart from bringing together the right type of masters and servants, it should be the aim of the registry office to supply servants only to those employers who are prepared to offer definite terms and conditions of employment thereby helping to raise the standards all round. The servants also

should be encouraged to seek the aid of these registries as far as possible and the records of their work and career should be maintained to improve their standard of efficiency. It would also be desirable on the part of these offices to enquire into, and obtain minimum references as to respectability of households before placing domestic servants in their care. This would be much in the interest of especially the women servants and young child servants for whom domestic service is often a plunge into the dark. It would also help to remove much of the social inequality that exists between the master-servant relationship and put the workers on a sound footing.

Even if the household workers be assured of improved conditions of work by the methods suggested above, there still remains one aspect of their life which could be remedied only by legislative action, and that is INSECURITY. *No programme for the domestic servants could be complete without their being covered and protected by social security legislation like the workers in other occupations.* This would be an essential step towards raising the status of the occupation. The domestic servants owing to their exclusion from all schemes of social security, and to the variations and vicissitudes in their wages, with no possibilities for saving for the future, face the uncertainties of a precarious old age for themselves and for their dependants. Also, no workmen's compensation or sickness benefit schemes are applicable to them so far as the present labour legislation is concerned, as was mentioned before.

Domestic servants like all human beings are liable to fall ill, or meet with accidents, which becomes an economic hazard, making them incapable of work and running them into debts to meet the necessary expenses. So far as accidents at the place of service are concerned, it may be remarked that although a home is a place of safety and shelter, it is not altogether free from dangers to workers. Mary V. Robinson has pointed out several possibilities through which accidents may occur to the workers in a household such as, "wet or polished floors, loose rugs; stairs and cellar and attic steps, climbing, reaching, lifting, carrying; fires, gas, electricity, fuel oils, cleaning chemicals, scalding fluids, hot irons, sharp utensils, fragile glass and china".<sup>6</sup>

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6. Mary V. Robinson, op. cit.

While some employers do offer a helping hand to their servants in the event of an illness or an accident, all are not in a financial position to do so, nor can they be expected to pay wages for labour not received. In such circumstances the extension of state insurance schemes against illness, accidents and also old age, to domestic servants, would do much to build up security and boost up morale among the workers employed in private households. A compulsory small tax from both the household employers and employees would bring considerable benefits to the workers. It must be made clear here that even in some of the western countries where no definite legislation exists to provide minimum wage rates or maximum working hours for the domestic workers, they are at least protected in almost all cases by social security systems all over. For instance, in the United Kingdom, private domestic employment is included within the National Insurance Act of 1946, and in the United States, the Social Security Act of 1950 has been extended to cover domestic workers. In almost all the European countries the domestic workers are protected by social insurance legislation. When the Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, echoes the claim that, "Every one has right to . . . security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control,"<sup>7</sup> it is difficult to understand why a large and important section of the working population in India should be allowed to work and live under such conditions of precariousness and insecurity.

We may conclude therefore, that with the creation of a healthy public opinion, formation of a workers' organization, and the backing of some legal protection, the occupation of the household workers in our country will be able to claim the same status and enjoy the same security as any other trade or industry. In the words of the late Pope Pius XII, it will be *in dignity second to none!*<sup>8</sup>

7. 'Post-War Trends In Social Security', *International Labour Review*-59 June, 1949.

8. The late Pope Pius XII in his address to the employers of Italy had asked them to admit that, "in dignity domestic service is second to none". Referred to in "The Economist", March 22, 1958, Article on The Servant Problem.

## APPENDIX I

### MEETING OF EXPERTS ON THE STATUS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF DOMESTIC WORKERS\*

IN ACCORDANCE with a decision of the Governing Body at its 112th and 113th Sessions, a meeting of experts on the status and conditions of employment of domestic workers was held in Geneva from 2 to 6 July 1951.

The meeting was attended by 12 experts from nine countries who were considered competent to represent the viewpoints of all parties concerned with the problems, namely, employers, workers and Governments.

#### AGENDA

The agenda of the meeting included the following points:

1. Contract of employment;
2. Conditions of life and employment;
3. Social security;
4. Vocational training and certification;
5. Home aid services.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The meeting submitted a number of recommendations concerning these points for the consideration of the Governing Body of the I.L.O., with a view to the possibility of placing on the agenda of an early session of the International Labour Conference the question of the status and conditions of employment of domestic workers.

\* *Industry and Labour*, Vol. 6, Oct. 1951, pp. 275—278.

## CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

The experts recognised the necessity of regulating the employer-employee relationship between domestic workers and their employers. In defining the rights and obligations of both parties, it was felt that consideration should be given to the special problems arising in connection with domestic work, such as duration of contracts, grounds for dismissal or abrogation of contracts, notice of termination of employment, safeguards for wages, length and conditions of the probationary period, settlement of disputes and the right of association of the worker. Contracts of especially long duration, life service or, in the case of children, of quasi — adoption in return for domestic service should not be considered as acceptable under any regulations that might be drawn up on the status and conditions of employment of domestic workers.

## CONDITIONS OF LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT

*Hours of work, rest periods and holidays:* The experts recommended that a limit should be prescribed for the hours of work of domestic workers, that they should be entitled to breaks, including time off for meals, and that provision should be made for them to enjoy an adequate daily rest period. They considered that the weekly rest period should consist of at least one whole or two half days, that it should be fixed by mutual agreement between the employer and the employee and that it should coincide partially, if not entirely, with the weekly rest period observed by other workers. Limitation of overtime and compensation in the form of free time or increased wages were considered desirable. It was felt that, while the granting of annual holidays with pay should take into account the length of service, domestic workers should, like other workers, also be entitled to the statutory holidays with pay or compensatory free time in lieu thereof. It was agreed that, in addition to cash payment for their holiday period resident workers should receive cash allowances in compensation for payment in kind.

*Wages:* The experts agreed that standard minimum wages for domestic workers should be established in all countries, either by means of special legal provisions, model contracts, collective agreements, legal provisions covering all workers, action under

public authority, such as that of the National Institute of House-workers in the United Kingdom, or by a combination of these methods.

*Maternity Protection:* It was felt that all benefits enjoyed by women workers in industry and commerce, particularly with regard to maternity leave and guaranteed employment, should be extended to domestic workers.

*Board and Lodging:* The experts considered that all resident domestic workers had a right to privacy and adequate lodging comparable to the general standards and the employer's status, as well as to wholesome food, all of which were important for their health and efficiency. Attention was drawn to the fact that careful consideration should be given in new building projects to the needs of domestic workers as regards lodging.

*Health Protection:* No specific recommendation was made on this subject. However, the experts felt that domestic workers would be protected in case of illness if they were covered by sickness insurance in the same way as other workers. It was considered that both resident and non-resident workers should be granted sick leave up to a prescribed maximum period of time before their contract of employment could be terminated on grounds of ill-health. It was believed that employers should feel morally responsible for providing resident workers with general care and lodging in case of illness.

*Protection of Young Domestic Workers:* The experts recommended that the age of admission of young persons to domestic employment should be the same as that of young persons to non-industrial employment. Young persons upto 18 years of age should work shorter hours than adult domestic workers and should be forbidden to work overtime in view of their need for rest, further education and recreation. They should not be employed on night work or on work unsuited to their age or harmful to their physical development. Young domestic workers should be entitled to holidays with pay on the same basis as young workers in general.

*Social Security:* The experts urged that in all countries the social security schemes in force should be extended to cover domestic workers. Where the ordinary social security benefits varied

according to the wages received, provision should be made for determining the benefits and contributions of domestic workers receiving payment partly in cash and partly in kind. There should be no sex discrimination with regard to contribution and benefits.

*Vocational Training and Certification:* The experts considered that vocational training was just as necessary for domestic work as for other occupations. They felt that there was a need for schemes of instruction of a theoretical and practical nature leading to officially recognised certificates. Such training could be given in vocational schools or centres and under systems of apprenticeship. They also suggested that opportunities should be provided for specialised training.

*Home aid Service:* The experts suggested that, pending their full development, home aid services should be made available at least to maternity cases, to elderly or sick persons and invalids as well as to children whose mothers were out at work or ill. The standard of training and qualifications of home aids should be comparable with those of domestic workers. Furthermore, home aids employed by public authorities should enjoy the same rights and benefits as other persons employed by those authorities. The experts were of the opinion that home aid services organised by private agencies should be under public supervision and that the training, qualifications, status and conditions of work of their employees should be the same as those of the employees of public home aid services.

*Proposed Action:* It was proposed that a tripartite technical conference might profitably undertake a preliminary study of the question of drawing up international regulations on the status and conditions of employment of domestic workers prior to its possible consideration by the International Labour Conference.

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## POST SCRIPT

### BILL NO. XIII OF 1959\*

*A bill to provide for better conditions of employment of persons engaged in household duties and to regulate hours of work, payment of wages, leave, etc.*

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Tenth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Domestic Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1959.

Short title,  
extent and  
commence-  
ment.

(2) It extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

2. (1) Nothing in this Act shall apply to persons engaged in commercial or industrial establishments or undertakings or to any other category of employment to which an Act providing for minimum wages applies.

Application

(2) This Act shall not also apply to persons who are engaged purely and exclusively for the purpose of doing job work, such as, cleaning of utensils or washing of clothes.

3. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,—

Definitions.

(1) 'domestic worker' means a person employed regularly, by anyone, either full time or part time, to do the work of (a) cooking, (b) sweeping, (c) cleaning, (d) gardening, (e) tending domestic animals, (f) keeping children, or (g) driving vehicles or to do all or any of these works or other domestic work for the employer's own family;

\* Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II Section 2, New Delhi, August 21, 1959.



(ii) 'employer' means a person who employs a domestic worker for the purposes mentioned in clause (i);

(iii) 'Police officer' means a person in charge of a police station not below the rank of a sub-inspector.

Interpreta-  
tion.

4. Words and expressions not defined in this Act shall have the meaning assigned to them in the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

Intimation  
to police.

5. (1) Whoever employs a domestic worker shall intimate, either orally or in writing, to the nearest police station of his having done so within seven days of such employment.

(2) The employer shall, while giving the intimation, furnish to the officer in charge of the police station, the name, the native place, names and other details of the former employers, if any, and names of nearest relations, if any, of the domestic worker and such other particulars as the police officer may demand and the employer can gather.

Verification  
of details.

6. (1) The officer in charge of the police station shall maintain a register of domestic workers and enter therein the particulars furnished by the employer under section 5 and shall also obtain the signature of the employer in the register, if the intimation and the particulars have been given orally.

(2) The officer in charge of the police station or some one deputed by him shall call on the employer within three days of the registration and verify the details furnished earlier. He may also gather from the domestic worker such other details as he may require. He shall, in particular, record the following:—

(i) Height.

(ii) Identity marks.

(iii) Specimen signature or thumb impression.

(3) The police officer shall, after getting all the information mentioned in sub-sections (1) and (2), immediately write to the police station of the place of origin of the domestic worker and ask for verification of the details.

(4) The police officer to whom an inquiry under sub-section (3) has been addressed shall immediately verify whether the particulars mentioned in the communication are correct and shall intimate the result of such inquiry to the police officer addressing the communication.

7. (1) If the police officer who has originally addressed a communication under sub-section (3) of section 6 finds that the report he has received under sub-section (4) of the said section does not tally with the details given about the domestic worker, he shall duly intimate the fact to the employer concerned.

Action to be taken by the Police Officer.

(2) The police officer may also call on the employer and ascertain further particulars so as to establish the identity and *bona fides* of the domestic worker concerned.

(3) The police officer shall in all cases duly intimate to the employer the result of the inquiry, whether the report received by him under sub-section (4) of section 6 is satisfactory or not.

8. (1) Any police officer not below the rank of a sub-inspector shall have the right to make periodic inspections of residential quarters with a view to ascertaining whether any domestic worker working there has been duly registered or not.

Inspection by police.

(2) If the police officer finds that any domestic worker has not been registered, he shall call upon the employer concerned to get him registered within a week.

9. (1) Every domestic worker shall be allowed at least one full day's rest every week.

Weekly holidays.

(2) No deduction shall be made from the wages of any domestic worker on account of weekly holidays under sub-section (1).

Time and condition of payment of wages.

10. (1) Wages of every domestic worker shall be paid within the first seven days of the next succeeding month.

(2) Where the employment of a domestic worker is terminated by the employer, the wages earned by the domestic worker shall be paid within three days of the termination of employment.

Wages and working hours.

11. (1) The minimum wage of a domestic worker under eighteen years of age shall be rupees thirty per month and over eighteen years of age rupees forty per month.

(2) No domestic worker shall be made to work for more than ten hours in a day.

Wages during leave.

12. (1) Every domestic worker shall be entitled after twelve months' continuous employment to privilege leave with full wages for a total period of not less than fifteen days.

(2) A domestic worker shall be entitled to casual leave with wages for a total period of not less than twelve days every year:

Provided that where a domestic worker has completed a continuous period of four months' service, he shall be entitled to privilege leave of not less than five days for every such completed period:

Provided further that the domestic worker may, if the employer so desires, agree to receive payment in lieu of privilege leave provided for in sub-section (1).

Defaults and penalties.

13. (1) (a) An employer who fails to comply with the provisions of sub-section (2) of section 8, section 9 or section 10, shall be liable to a fine which may extend to twenty-five rupees;

(b) an employer who fails to comply with the provisions of section 11 or section 12, shall be liable to a fine which may extend to fifty rupees.

(2) All defaults under this section shall be cognizable.

14. Any police officer not below the rank of a sub-inspector may take necessary proceedings against an employer for not complying with the provisions of this Act. Proceedings against the employer.

15. (1) The Central Government may make rules for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of this Act. Power to make rules

(2) All rules made under this section shall be laid for not less than thirty days before each House of Parliament as soon as may be after they are made and shall be subject to such modifications as Parliament may make during the session in which they are so laid or the session immediately following.

16. Nothing in this Act shall be construed so as to preclude the employer and the domestic worker from entering into a contract which would benefit the latter in material respects. Saving.

\* \* \*

The above Bill, providing for the registration of domestic workers, and regulating their hours of work, payment of wages, conditions of service and leave, and affording protection to them, will indeed be welcomed by all those sections of the public which have the welfare of the domestic servants at heart. It is to be expected that it will go a long way towards standardizing the occupation of domestic service and putting it, more or less, in line with other occupations. Nevertheless, mention should be made here that, it possesses certain drawbacks which deserve attention and need to be remedied.

In the first place, the registration of domestic servants at police stations, and police officers inspecting the homes of private employers, may be rather distasteful both to the domestic servants and to their employers. Instead, it might be suggested that, separate registry offices, exclusively for domestic workers, may be set up with labour inspectors having authority to perform the similar tasks that are to be entrusted to

police officers as provided in the Bill. The same registry offices may also act as employment bureaus introducing servants to employers and employers to servants, thus solving, to some extent, the problem of employment for the domestic workers.

Secondly, the fixation in the Bill of minimum wages for the domestic workers deserves reconsideration. Domestic service is an occupation that comprises a variety of functions requiring different grades of efficiency and different numbers of hours of work from the workers, as discussed in this book. Therefore, an assessment of a minimum wage for the domestic servants should be made in relation with the number of hours of work, the nature of the functions performed, the quality of the amenities offered in the form of food and lodging, the cost of living in different places, and also with the efficiency and experience of the servants. It is this aspect of the occupation that presents difficulties which cannot be solved at one stroke, and that requires delicate calculations and expert handling.

The provision for privilege and casual leave will be a great relief to a large number of workers in domestic service who hardly enjoy such benefits. To this, one would like to add a provision for sick leave and for maternity leave for female workers.

The Bill does not contain any separate restrictions on the hours of work and the nature of the tasks performed, for child servants and old persons. This matter also needs to be incorporated in the Bill.

Finally, the one important item that is absent, is the provision for security during sickness and old age, an addition of which will certainly ensure a great deal of security in the lives of these workers. A compulsory small tax every month to insure against old age and sickness, both from the employer and the servant, which can be remitted at the servants' registry offices, is likely to serve the purpose. It may be pointed out here that, a somewhat similar measure has been adopted in the United States, for domestic workers, under the Social Security Act of 1950.

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